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ANNE HERFORD.



VOL. III.



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# ANNE HERFORD.

A Novel.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

“EAST LYNNE,” “THE RED COURT FARM,”

ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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# ANNE HEREFORD.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A NIGHT ALARM.

It was the loveliest autumn I had ever remembered. Clear, soft, balmy; the foliage glowing with its ruddy tints, the sky blue and beautiful.

There would be a fire in the grate of the oak-parlour, and the window thrown open to the lawn and the scent of the sweet flowers. One afternoon I sat there, a bit of work in my hand, the sprays of jessamine nearly touching me, and the far off pine-walk looking almost as bright as though no ghost had the reputation of haunting it. Mr. Chandos sat at the table writing. Out of doors or in, we were very much together, and my heart was at rest. I'm afraid I had taken to think that the heaven of hereafter could not be more blissful than this that I seemed to be living in now.

His foot was weak again. Not to disable him from getting about ; only to deter him from walking more than was absolutely necessary. It was all his own fault ; as Mr. Dickenson, the surgeon, told him ; he had persisted in using the ankle too much before it was quite strong.

Lady Chandos kept her rooms still ; report said her bed ; and the impression in the house was that she lay in danger. The discovery of the petty pilferer, or pilferers, appeared to be as far off as ever : but one or two strange things connected with the subject were about to occur.

“ Will you put these on the hall-table for me, Anne ? ”

I turned to take the letters from him. When he did not let me save his foot in these little things, it made me cross, and I told him so. One of the letters was addressed to his sister.

“ You have been writing to Madame de Mellissie, Mr. Chandos ! ”

“ Yes. We heard from her this morning. She expects to be here in a day or two. Stay ! I think I will show my mother what I have said. You shall put only the other one on the table.”



The news fell on my heart like a shaft of ice. Chandos had become all too dear.

The other letter was to Mr. Haines ; I remembered the name as that of an agent who had taken the house by the lodge-gates for Mr. Edwin Barley. It was sealed with the Chandos coat of arms in black wax. I had never seen Mr. Chandos use red. Lizzy Dene was passing through the hall as I laid the letter down. I observed that she looked at me ; seemed to look at what I was doing ; and Mrs. Penn and Hill were speaking on the stairs, nearly beyond view ; whether they saw me or not, I could not say.

“Thank you,” said Mr. Chandos, when I went in again. “What should I do without you to fetch and carry ? I want that book now.”

It lay on the side-table ; a dreadfully dry scientific work. He locked his desk and took the book from me.

“You must put down your slavery to my stupid foot. When you get disabled, Anne, I’ll do as much for you.”

“You know the fault is yours, Mr. Chandos. Had you only been a little patient when the foot

was getting better, it would have been strong before now. As to the slavery——”

“ Well ? What as to the slavery ? Are you going to strike ? ”

I had been about to say that I *liked* the slavery, but stopped in time. The colour of embarrassment was coming into my cheek, and I turned it off with a light laugh and light words.

“ I won’t strike just yet. Not until Madame de Mellissie comes.”

“ Then suppose you lend me your shoulder ? ”

He could have walked quite well without it, as he knew and I knew ; I dare say if put to it he might have walked to the railway station. But ah ! the bliss of feeling his hand on me ! if it were only half as great to him he had kept his ankle sick for ever !

“ As to Emily, with her proverbial uncertainty, she is just as likely to be here in two months as in two days, Anne.”

I took up my work again ; a pretty bag I was embroidering in gray and black silk for Lady Chandos. He sat on the other side the window, reading his book and talking to me between

whiles. All things seemed full of rest and peace and love ; a very paradise.

Soon—I dare say it was an hour, but time passed so swiftly—we heard footsteps come along the broad walk to the portico. I looked out to see whose they were.

“ It is Mr. Dexter,” I said to Mr. Chandos.

“ Dexter ! The very man I wanted to see. Now you need not go away,” he added, as I began to gather up my work, “ we are not about to talk treason. Don’t you know, Anne, that I like to have you with me while I may.”

He must have been thinking of the approaching separation that the advent of Emily would bring about. But I had to get some more silk, and went to fetch it, staying in my room some minutes. When I got back they were both seated at the table, some papers before them. I turned to the window, and went on with my work.

The conversation appeared to be of little moment ; of none to me ; it was of leases, rents, repairs, and other matters connected with the estate. Presently Mr. Dexter mentioned that he had received a letter from Haines.

“Have you?” said Mr. Chandos. “I wrote to him this afternoon. What does he say?”

Mr. Dexter took a letter from his pocket-book, and put it into his master’s hand, who ran his eyes over it.

“My letter will be useless, then, and I must write another,” he observed when he had finished. “I’ll get it, and show you what I said. It will save explanation.”

“Let me get it for you, Mr. Chandos,” I interposed, anxious to save him. And without waiting for permission I left the room. But the letter was not on the table.

“It is not there, Mr. Chandos; it is gone.”

“It cannot be gone,” he said, taking out his watch. “It is only four o’clock. Emily’s letter is not put there yet.”

Hickens was called. Hickens, in a marvel of consternation—at being asked what he had done with the letter—protested he had not seen it; he had not been in the hall that afternoon.

We all went out; it seemed so strange a thing; and I showed Mr. Chandos where I had

laid the letter. It had not slipped down; it could not be seen anywhere. Mr. Chandos looked at me: he was evidently thinking that the spy was again at work.

“Was any one in the hall when you put the letter here, Miss Hereford?”

“Lizzy Dene was passing through it. And Mrs. Penn and Hill were standing on the stairs.”

“They would not touch it,” said Mr. Chandos, just as Lizzy Dene, hearing the commotion, looked from the door of the large dining-room. It was her place to keep the room in order, and she seemed to choose odd times to do it in. Mr. Chandos questioned her, but she said she had not touched the letter; had not in fact noticed it.

At this juncture Mrs. Chandos came down the stairs, dressed for going out, attended by Mrs. Penn. She inquired of Mr. Chandos what the matter was.

“A letter has mysteriously disappeared from the hall, Ethel,” he replied.

“A letter disappeared! how strange!” she returned, in the rather vacant manner that at

times characterized her. "Was it of consequence?"

"In itself, no. But these curious losses are always of consequence in another sense of the word. I beg your pardon, Mrs. Penn: did you speak?"

For Mrs. Penn, who first stood back in surprise, had advanced behind him, and was saying something in a low tone.

"Mr. Chandos! rely upon it, the same hand that opened my letter has taken this one. You ought not to leave a stone unturned to discover the culprit. I speak in the interest of all."

Mr. Chandos nodded grave assent. He seemed to be in a hopeless puzzle. I fully suspected Lizzy Dene; and I think she saw something of this in my face.

"What should I do with a letter that was not mine?" she cried, her tone resentful, and addressing no one in particular. "If Mr. Chandos offered me a dozen of his letters to read, I'd rather be spared the trouble; I am no great scholar. And what good would they do me?"

The argument seemed all conclusive; at least

to Mr. Chandos. I suspected the girl more and more.

“Well, Harry, I must leave you to your investigation, if I am to have a walk this afternoon,” concluded Mrs. Chandos.

She went out and turned down the broad walk. Lizzy resumed her work in the dining-room, I and Mr. Dexter went back to the oak-parlour and stood at the window: and then I became aware that Mrs. Penn had lingered in the portico, talking with Mr. Chandos.

“Until recently I believed we had the most trustworthy set of servants that it is possible for any family to have,” he was saying. “What can there be in my letters that should interest them?”

“Nay,” said Mrs. Penn, “I think it is the greater wonder what there should be in mine. I am a stranger to your servants: my affairs cannot be supposed to concern any one of them.”

“It is my habit to leave letters on the table every day. They have never been touched or tampered with, so far as I know, until this afternoon.”



"You cannot be sure of that. But what shall you do in the matter now?"

"I don't know what to do; it is the sort of thing that causes me to feel at a nonplus. Were I to have an officer in the house to watch, as you suggest, it might prove useless."

"Have you a suspicion of any one in particular?" she abruptly asked. And by this time Mr. Dexter had grown interested in the conversation, and was listening as closely as I.

"Not the slightest. Neither can you have, I suppose."

Mrs. Penn was silent.

"Have you?" repeated he, thinking her manner peculiar.

"I would rather not answer the question, Mr. Chandos; because it would inevitably be followed by another."

"Which is equivalent to admitting that your suspicions are directed to some one in particular," he returned, with awakened interest. "Why should you object to avow it?"

"Well, it is so," she replied. "I do think that all the circumstances—taking one loss, one



disagreeable event with another—do tend to point suspicion to a certain quarter. But I may be wrong.”

“To whom?” he asked.

“That is just the question that I knew would follow,” returned Mrs. Penn, “and I must decline to answer it. No, Mr. Chandos; you possess the same facilities for observing and judging that I do: in fact greater ones: and if you cannot draw your own deductions, I certainly will not help you to them. I might be wrong, you know.”

“You must allude to an inmate of Chandos?”

“I should deem it impossible that any but an inmate of Chandos could play these tricks. Where would be the opportunity?”

“Mrs. Penn, if you possess any clue; nay, if you think you have any well-founded cause of suspicion, you ought to impart it to me,” he gravely said.

“Were I *sure* that my suspicions were correct, I would do so; but, as I say, they may be mistaken. Forgive me if I hint that perhaps your own eyes are shut closer than they need be.”

She hastened away, leaving the impression of her mysterious words behind. I wondered very much if she alluded to Lizzy Dene.

That same evening I had an opportunity of asking her. Mr. Chandos went to the west wing after dinner, I sat near the lights, working at my bag, when Mrs. Penn came into the oak-parlour, not having troubled herself to knock for admittance.

"It's fine to be you, Anne Hereford," she said, putting herself into Mr. Chandos's chair by the fire. "I wish I had this room to sit in."

"Are the rooms up-stairs not comfortable?"

"I don't know about comfort: they are wretchedly dull. I'd as soon be cooped up in a prison. Not a soul to speak to from morning to night, but Mrs. Chandos. Here you have Mr. Chandos; full state and ceremony; and the chance of seeing all the visitors."

"All the visitors consist of a doctor now and then, and Mr. Dexter once a week, or so," I said, laughing.

"A doctor and an agent are better than no-

body. I suppose," she added, after a pause, "they are all assembled in party conclave in the west wing ; Mr. Chandos, Mrs. Chandos, and my lady."

"I wish Lady Chandos was better," I remarked.

Mrs. Penn turned round eagerly, her eye lighting with excitement.

"I *wish* I knew what it is that's the matter with her ! I wish I knew ! Do you never gather a hint of it from Mr. Chandos ?"

"Never. But why should you be so desirous to learn ? What is it to you, Mrs. Penn ?"

"I have my reasons," she replied, nodding her head. "I won't tell them to you this evening, but I have not made a vow that I never will. If she is insane, as I suspect, why then—but I'll say no more now. What a strange thing it is about that letter !"

"Very. You are suspecting some one in particular ?"

"Well ?" she answered, sharply, turning her face to me.

"Is it Lizzy Dene ?"

“Who it is, or who it is not, is nothing to you,” she rejoined, in the crossiest tone I ever heard. “I know this: I would give the worth of a dozen letters ten times over to bring the mystery to light. They may be suspecting you and me next.”

“Mrs. Penn !”

“Yes, Mrs. Penn !” she retorted in a mocking tone. “We are the only strangers in the house, Anne Hereford.”

As if my words had angered her past redemption, she quitted the room abruptly. Very soon Mr. Chandos returned to it, and the tea came in. He began talking of the lost letter—of the unpleasantness altogether. Should I tell him of my doubt? The old proverb runs, that if a woman deliberates she is lost: it proved so in my case, and I mentioned Lizzy Dene.

“Lizzy Dene !” repeated Mr. Chandos, in great surprise. “*Lizzy Dene !*”

“But indeed it is a doubt more than a suspicion; and it arises chiefly from my having found her in my room that night,” I eagerly added, feeling half afraid of what I had done,

and determined not to hint at her supposed alliance with Mr. Edwin Barley.

“Rely upon it, you are wrong, Anne,” Mr. Chandos decided, without any pause. “Lizzy Dene would be the very last woman to act in a treacherous manner to our family. She may be foolishly superstitious, but she is honest as the day. I’ll answer for *her*.”

How could I say more?—unless my grounds against Lizzy Dene had been surer. Joseph took away the tea-things, and Mr. Chandos went to his own sitting-room. I stood at the little table in the corner of the room nearest the window, putting my work-box to rights. Some of its reels were on the window-ledge, and I moved to get them.

I don’t know why I should have done it; unthinkingly, I believe; but I drew aside the muslin curtain to look out on the lovely night, and found my face in contact (save for the glass that was between us) with that of another face, peering in. Terribly startled, I drew away with a scream. Mr. Chandos came back at the moment, and I gave a frightened word of ex-

planation. Quick as lightning, he laid forcible hold of me, put me in a chair in the sheltered corner close to the work-box, ordered me to stay in it—*ordered* me, and in the most peremptory manner—and turned to the window to fling it up. One moment and he had leaped out: but in his haste he broke a pane of glass.

I sat there, trembling and shaking; the window open, the curtain waving gently in the night breeze—and the thought of that terrible face without. Mr. Chandos looked stern and white when he returned—not through the window—and blood was dripping from his hand.

“I can see no one: but I could not stay long, my hand bled so,” he said, snatching up his white handkerchief which lay on the table, and winding it round the palm. “But now—Anne, do you think these can be fancies of yours? This is the second time.”

“I wish I could think so. I am *certain* a man stood there, looking in. He had not time to draw away. I just moved to the window from that corner, so that he did not see me approaching.”

“Whose face was it? That man’s by the lodge-gates—Edwin Barley?”

My very fear. But I did not dare to say it. What I did say was the strict truth—that it had all passed so momentarily and I was so startled, as to allow no chance of recognition.

“Can you find a piece of linen rag, Anne? I don’t care to make a commotion over this. I dare say I can do up my hand myself: I’m a bit of a surgeon.”

I ran up-stairs to get some, and began turning over the contents of my large trunk in search of it. In doing this, a small parcel, very small, got into my hands, and I looked at it with some curiosity, not remembering what it contained.

As I undid the paper two sovereigns fell into my hand. They were not mine; I possessed none. As I looked and wondered, a strange thought flashed through my mind: were they the two lost sovereigns marked by Mr. Chandos?

There was no time to stay speculating; Mr. Chandos was waiting for the rag. Finding it, I ran down.

“You ought to put your hand in warm water,

Mr. Chandos. There may be fragments of glass in it."

"I was thinking so," he said; when at that moment Hickens came in with a letter. The man noticed the white handkerchief and its stains.

"You have met with an accident, sir!"

"Ah," said Mr. Chandos, in a tone of raillery, as if making light of the affair, "this comes, Hickens, of doing things in a hurry. You must bring me a basin of warm water. I attempted to open the window, not observing it was fastened, and my hand slipped through the glass. Close the shutters. At once."

Hickens went to the window: I stood by Mr. Chandos with the linen rag. "Presently," he nodded; "I must wait for the water. Open this for me, will you, Anne?"

I unsealed the letter, and opened it. In handing it to him, my eyes accidentally fell upon my own name.

"It is about me!" I exclaimed, in thoughtless impulse.

Mr. Chandos ran his eyes over the lines—



there were but few—and a scowl contracted his brow. He read them over again, and then folded the letter with his one hand.

“Hickens, who brought this? When did it come?”

“It came but now, sir. A lad brought it to the back-door. I happened to be standing there and took it from him. ‘For Mr. Chandos,’ he said, and turned away. I thought how quickly he made off.”

“Should you know him again?”

“No, sir, I think not. I’m not sure, though.”

“Well, bring the warm water.”

“Is the letter from Madame de Mellissie?” I asked.

“I don’t know who it is from,” said Mr. Chandos. “It is anonymous.”

“Anonymous! And about me!”

I stood looking at him. I connected this letter with the two sovereigns I had just found: was any one at work to ruin me in the estimation of Chandos House?

“Mr. Chandos, that is not a pleasant letter, is it?”

“Anonymous letters never are pleasant ones,” he rejoined. “If I had my way, the writers of such should all be shaken in a bag together and sunk in the bottom of the sea. Do not let it trouble you; it defeats its own ends.”

“Will you allow me to read it?”

“It would give you no pleasure.”

“But it might give me some light; and light is what I want just now; I do indeed. Let me see it, Mr. Chandos! I request it as a favour.”

“Very well. My showing it to you will prove the sort of estimation I have for it.”

Taking the letter from his unresisting hand, I opened it and laid it before me. It ran as follows:—

“MR. CHANDOS,—It is rumoured that you have some trouble in your house, and are suspecting your servants. The probability is that they are honest; they have been with you long enough to be proved. There are two strangers under your roof: the companion to Mrs. Chandos, and the younger lady, Miss Hereford. Please just reflect that all the misfortunes have

occurred since these ladies entered Chandos. In doing this, perhaps you will find a way out of the wood. The suggestion is offered by

A FRIEND."

"This would implicate Mrs. Penn as well as myself!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," he said. "Forgetting that Mrs. Penn is a sufferer. Or perhaps not knowing it."

The tears rose: I could not help it. "Then—do you doubt *me*, Mr. Chandos?"

He touched my arm; and those grave eyes of his, half laughing then, looked right into mine.

"Doubt you? So greatly that I am deliberating whether I shall not call in the police again and give you in charge."

It was said in jest I knew, but at that moment it told upon me, and the sobs were palpably near the surface. Hickens was heard approaching with the basin of water.

"Oh, Anne, Anne! you are a very simple child."

"Will you see to your hand, sir?"

"Ay, it wants seeing to."

It was the palm that was cut ; badly, I thought. Mr. Chandos seemed to understand what to do, and dressed it himself with the butler's help, I watching the process. When we were alone again, I took the little parcel from my pocket, and gave it to Mr. Chandos.

"Will you please to open that, sir?"

"Two sovereigns," he cried, as he did so. "What of them?"

I told him all about it, where I found them. He held them close to the light, and smiled.

"They are the sovereigns I lost out of my desk, Anne."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure? Here are the marks. See."

Standing close, I looked where he pointed. The marks were plain. I went to my seat and sat down.

"And you found them in your trunk! Anne, who is your enemy in the house?"

"I did not know I had one, sir. So far as I am aware I have not given offence to any within it. I must quit it now."

“Oh, indeed! What else would you like to do?”

I could no longer keep my tears back; it was of no use trying, and they ran over my cheeks. “It seems to me, Mr. Chandos, that I am no longer safe in it.”

“You are perfectly safe, Anne, for you possess in it a powerful protector. One who will not suffer harm to reach you; who will be a shield to you in every assault; who will guard annoyance from you so far as shall be practicable.”

I knew that he alluded to himself, and thanked him in my heart. But—so far as was practicable! There it lay. If I really had a hidden enemy, who might shield me? Mr. Edwin Barley it could not be; and I fell back to the suspecting of Lizzy Dene.

Mr. Chandos began telling off the inmates on his fingers.

“There’s my mother, Mrs. Chandos, myself, Hill, Hickens; for all these I can answer. Then come the servants. For some of them I can equally answer, Lizzy Dene being one;

but I regard them all as honest and trustworthy."

"Therefore the uncertain ones are only Mrs. Penn and myself."

"And Mrs. Penn is certainly exempted," he rejoined. "For she has been meddled with in an equal degree with any of us."

"That leaves only me!"

"Just so; only you. But Anne," bending those earnest eyes upon me, "I would answer for you with my *life*."

"If it is not Lizzy Dene that is my enemy, who else can it be?" I exclaimed, foolishly speaking what was in my thoughts.

"Why should you think it to be Lizzy Dene more than any one else?" he hastily cried, in a resenting sort of tone. "She can have no cause of enmity against you."

There flashed across me that interview with Mr. Edwin Barley. If it was Lizzy Dene who had held it, who was in league with him, no need to search for a motive.

"That I have an enemy is indisputable. The

letter you have just received and these sovereigns prove it."

"Anne, Lizzy Dene could not have written such a letter as this."

That he was prejudiced in favour of Lizzy Dene, determined to admit nothing against her, seemed evident; and I let the subject drop.

But now the strangest incident was to occur; an alarming incident; nay, it might rather be called a scene. In the minute's silence that had supervened, Mrs. Penn glided into the room without notice. The word "glided" is not inapplicable; she came softly in, scarcely seeming to move, her face scared, her voice sunk to a whisper.

"Mr. Chandos! Do you know that there are mounted police outside the house?"

He rose from his seat, looking at her as if he thought she must be dreaming.

"Mounted police!" he repeated.

"They are riding quietly up, three of them; I saw their sabres flash in the starlight. I had gone

to the library to get a book for Mrs. Chandos ; she having sent to Hill for the key ; when I thought I heard a noise as of horsemen, and opened the shutters to look out. Oh, Mr. Chandos ! what can they have come for ? They once rode up to a house where I was staying, in the same silent manner ; it was to make investigations in a charge of murder.”

I had seen Mr. Chandos turn pale before ; you have heard me say so ; but I never saw a tinge so livid in man or woman as that which overspread his countenance now. He retained nevertheless his self-possession ; ay, and that quiet tone of command which somehow is rarely disobeyed.

“ You will be so kind as return immediately to Mrs. Chandos,” he calmly said to Mrs. Penn. “ *Close the doors of the east wing* as soon as you have entered, and keep her attention amused. She is excitable—as you by this time probably know—and this visit must be kept from her cognizance.”

Allowing no time for answer or dissent, he took Mrs. Penn by the hand somewhat peremp-



torily, and watched her go upstairs. Then he stole to the hall-door and put up its bar without noise. As for me, I do not know that I had ever in my whole life felt so sick and frightened. All the past scene at Mr. Edwin Barley's, when the mounted police had come there, recurred to me : and Mr. Chandos's manner completed the dread. I put my hands on his arm ; reticence was forgotten in the moment's terror ; as he stood listening in the middle of the oak-parlour.

“ Tell me what it is ! Tell me ! ”

“ Oh, Anne, this is an awful blow,” he said, in the deepest agitation, as if he had never heard my words. “ I joked about the police coming to take you in charge, but——”

“ Not for me ! They cannot have come for me ! ” I reiterated foolishly, in my confused alarm.

“ Would to heaven they had come for you ! I mean, would they had come for one who could as readily be exonerated as you ! Mercy ! mercy ! so the blow has fallen at last ! ”

The words brought to my memory what Mrs. Penn had said, about a sword hanging by a single

hair over Mr. Chandos and his family. I don't think he knew what he was about. He walked across the hall towards the stairs, hesitated, and came back, listening evidently for the knocking of the police; all in the deepest agitation and alarm.

"It may be well for me not to go!" he muttered. "Better that I should be here to face them when they enter! Anne, run you and find Hill: bring her hither quickly: but make no alarm."

I knew it was the hour of supper in the house-keeper's room, and ran to it. Hill was seated at the head of the table, the upper-servants round her.

"Mrs. Hill," I said, appearing among them without ceremony, "Mr. Chandos wants you for a moment. Instantly, if you please."

"There! His hand has burst out bleeding again!" surmised Hickens, who occupied the chair opposite Hill. Mrs. Hill said nothing, but rose and followed me. As we passed through the hall, there came a loud ring at the front door, and a knocking at it as if with sabres.

“Hill,” Mr. Chandos whispered, drawing her into the oak-parlour, and there was a world of dread and terror in his tone, “the police are outside the house, mounted.”

She shrieked out aloud, making the room ring. The woman actually trembled all over.

“Hush!” interrupted Mr. Chandos. “Don’t lose *your* senses, Hill.”

“Oh, Mr. Harry! the police at last! It’s what I have dreamt of ever since that awful night!”

“Well, you and I must be calm. You know the plan decided upon; if it ever came to this. I may not go; I must stay and face it. Make you haste! And—Hill! *lock* the outer door of the east wing on the outside; Mrs. Chandos must not see these men.”

Hill did not stay to listen. She appeared to take in all, and was flying up the stairs, breathless and panting. There came another ring, another noise as with the sabres: and Robin, one of the under men, who was coming across the hall, increased his speed. Mr. Chandos arrested him.

"Robin, desire Hickens to attend himself. I wish it."

The man turned back, and Mr. Chandos stood for a moment against the wall, his hands on his pale face.

"Mr. Chandos!" I said, in emotion great as his, "why are you afraid? what dreadful thing is it! Confide in me! tell me!"

"That you may run from me, as the rest will do! You have said the word, Anne—dreadful. That is it."

Hickens was advancing to the hall. Mr. Chandos went out to him; I looked from the parlour-door.

"Hickens," said Mr. Chandos, speaking with apparent carelessness, "these may be the police at the door. If so, they may enter."

"Them police again, sir!" returned Hickens, in consternation. "Weren't they satisfied with their last visit? Whatever can they want at this hour?"

"That's my business," replied Mr. Chandos. And Hickens turned to the entrance.

"What a cowardly donkey that Joseph is,

barring up the house before bed-time!" quoth  
Hickens to himself as he threw wide the  
door.

Threw it wide, and admitted two of the officers.  
The other one remained with the horses.

## CHAPTER II.

SEEN IN THE GALLERY BY MOONLIGHT.

MR. CHANDOS advanced with suavity ; the officers saluted him and took off their hats. He held his handkerchief to his face, as if fearing the draught : *I* knew that it was to shade his livid countenance.

“ A late visit, gentlemen ! To what am I indebted for it ? ”

He had been gradually withdrawing to the oak-parlour as he spoke, and they came with him. I drew back in confused indecision, and stood humbly in the remotest and darkest corner. I had not courage to quit the room, for I must have brushed by them : I hoped that Mr. Chandos would see and dismiss me. But no ; he never looked my way. He closed the door, in the face of Hickens, whose state of mind was a pretty even balance between wonder and dismay.

“ We could not get here sooner, sir,” observed one of the officers, who spoke quite like a gentleman, “ but we hope the delay has not been inconvenient to you. The inspector, to whom your note was addressed, was out when it arrived, so that it was not opened immediately.”

Had the sentence been spoken in an unknown tongue, it could not more completely have puzzled Mr. Chandos, to judge by his looks.

“ What note do you speak of ?”

“ The note you sent in to-day.”

This appeared to be no elucidation to Mr. Chandos.

“ Will you tell me what its contents were ?”

“ We got but one, sir. It requested two or three of us to be here to-night, mounted. It intimated that the thief, who has been playing tricks in your house, was discovered, and would be given up to us. Our inspector wondered why we were wanted to come mounted.”

Oh, the change that fell over the face of Mr. Chandos ! the eager light of hope, the vivid rush of renewed colour ! It was as one awakening from death to life.

"Gentlemen," he said with a smile, as he pointed to seats, "I fear a trick has been played upon *you*. I have not written to your inspector, and most certainly possess, as yet, no clue to the parties who have been so disagreeably busy at Chandos."

They seemed hardly to believe him. For my own part I could scarcely tell what was real, what not.

"But you must not go back without refreshment, although you have had a useless ride," concluded Mr. Chandos, when some further explanation had passed. "It shall be brought in at once," he added, ringing for Hickens. "And this young lady," looking at me then, "will obligingly see the housekeeper and bid her hasten it."

I obeyed the look and followed him into the hall. Hickens was there.

"Supper, Hickens. These gentlemen will take some before their departure. Bring the best of what you have, and be quick over it."

Hickens moved away with alacrity: the word "departure" had reassured him, and also seemed



to afford hope that his curiosity would be satisfied. Mr. Chandos caught my hand and drew me through the door to the foot of the stairs. His own hand was trembling, and cold as ice: unconsciously, I think, to himself, he laid it on my shoulder, and spoke in the gentlest whisper.

“Go to the west wing, Anne. Knock at the outer door, but do not attempt to enter. Hill will answer you. Tell her to inform Lady Chandos that it is a false alarm; that the officers have only come respecting what was recently lost from my desk, and that I have ordered supper for them. Say that I will be with my mother as soon as possible, but I remain at present to entertain them.”

He returned swiftly to the parlour, closing the door, leaving me to proceed on my errand. Hill answered my knock, her face and her cap of an equal whiteness, and I delivered the message, speaking in a whisper. Strangely relieved seemed she, at least in an equal degree with Mr. Chandos, and she made me repeat the little I had heard said by the officers, as if scarcely

daring to believe the good tidings, without confirmation.

“Heaven be praised!” she exclaimed; “it would just have killed my lady. Bless you, child, for a good girl.”

That Hill’s relief of mind must have been something extraordinary for her to bless *me*, one could but acknowledge; and I excused her shutting the baize door in my face.

In less than half an hour, I heard the police ride away, as I sat in my chamber, and Mr. Chandos passed to the west wing. It was very dull for me in that lonely bedroom, and only half-past nine o’clock; so I thought I might go down again. Hickens was putting the things together on the supper tray.

“Miss, do you know what those men came for?” he asked.

“Well, Hickens, not exactly. Nothing at all to be afraid of, so far as I could gather. I heard Mr. Chandos laughing with them when they went away.”

“Oh, I heard that; I was rung for to show ’em out,” returned Hickens. “My opinion is

this, miss, that it's just a scandal for policemen to ride up at will in the dark night to a gentleman's seat—almost a nobleman's—and if I were Mr. Chandos I'd let them know it. Swords clanging to 'em, indeed ! What next ?”

He went away with his tray. Five minutes afterwards Mr. Chandos came down. He was so gay ; his step was light, his face smiling. It was only the reaction that sometimes sets in after deliverance from great fear. I had not thought to see him again that night : and stupidly said so.

“No ! I came to look after you ; lest you should have melted away with terror. Were you very much scared, Anne ?”

“Yes ; just at first.”

“Take it for all in all this has been a sensational evening,” he resumed, laughing. “My accident at the window ; your discovery of the marked money in your box ; and the visitation of the police. Private families cannot in general boast of so much entertainment all at once.”

I looked at him wistfully. After the intense agitation and dread he had betrayed, this light

tone sounded very unnatural ; almost like a mocking make-believe.

“ Mr. Chandos, I fear you live in some great peril,” was my timid rejoinder. “ I suppose I may not be told what it is ; but I wish I could ease you ; I wish I could avert it from you, whatever it may be.”

As if by magic, his mood changed, and the dark shade came back to his countenance. “ So you won’t let me cheat myself, Anne ! I was trying if I could do it.”

“ If you would but tell me what it is ! If I could avert it from you !”

“ No living being can do that, child. I wish I could forget it, if only for a moment.”

“ And you cannot ?”

“ Never ; by night or by day. I appear as the rest of the world does ; I laugh, I talk ; but within lies ever that one terrible care, weighing me down like an incubus.”

How terrible it was, I could see even then, as he covered his eyes for a moment with his wasted hand.

“ But to-night has brought me a great relief

—though it may be but temporary,” he resumed, looking up. “How thankful I felt when the police explained their errand, God alone can ever know.”

“But what errand did you fear they had come upon?”

“That I cannot tell you. Not upon quite so harmless a one as it turned out to be.”

“Better, perhaps, that they had come for me.”

Mr. Chandos smiled—as well he might at the words; and passed to a gayer strain.

“Which of the three would you have preferred to ride before, had I given you into custody for finding that money of mine in your possession? We must have looked for a pil-lion!”

But I did not answer in the same jesting spirit; I could not so readily forget my alarm, or their hidden trouble. Very gravely, for it was nearly bed-time, I put my hand out to wish him good-night. He took it within both of his, and there was a pause of silence.

“Anne,” he said, his low voice sounding

strangely solemn in the stillness of the room, "you have been to-night forced into what may be called a species of confidence as to our unhappy secrets ; at least, to have become cognizant that Chandos has things to be concealed. Will you be true to us—in so far as not to speak of this?"

"I will."

"In the house and out of it?"—and he seemed to lay emphasis on the "in."

"I will be true as heaven," I answered in my earnestness. "I will seem to forget that I know it myself."

"Thank you, my best friend. Good-night."

I had come up earlier than usual ; it was not ten o'clock ; and I thought I might read for half an hour without transgressing any good rule. But where had I left my book ? Looking about I could not see it.

It occurred to me then. I had been sitting reading in the gallery window for some minutes before dinner ; and must have left the book there. It was but a few steps, and I went to fetch it.

There it was. I found it by feel, not by sight. The moon was bright again, but the window-shutters were closed and barred. It was that beautiful story, the "Heir of Redclyffe." Madame de Mellissie had bought the Tauchnitz edition of it in Paris, and had left it behind her at Chandos. Soon after she departed, I had found it and read it; and was now dipping into it again.

But now—as I took it in my hand, there occurred a very strange thing, frightening me nearly to death. Turning from the window, the whole length of gallery was before me up to the door of the west wing, the moonlight shining into it in places from the high windows above. There, midway in the passage, the moonlight revealing it, was a shadowy sort of form; looking like nothing on earth but an apparition.

I was in the shade; in the dark; remember that. Gliding along slowly, one of its arms stretched out, looking just as if it were stretched out in warning to me to escape—and I had not the sense then to remember that I must be invisible—on it came. A tall, thin skeleton of a form,

with a white and shadowy face. There was no escape for me: to fly to my own room would be to meet it; and no other door of refuge was open.

It has never been your fate, as I feel sure, my gentle reader, to be at one end of a gallery in a haunted house at night and see a ghost gliding towards you from the other; so please don't laugh at me. What my sensations were I can neither describe nor you conceive: I cannot bear to think of them even now. That I beheld the ghost, said to haunt Chandos, my sick heart as fully believed, in that moment, as it believed in Heaven. Presence of mind forsook me; all that the wildest imagination can picture of superstitious terror assailed me: and I almost think—yes, I do think—that I might have lost my senses or died, but for the arrival of succour.

Oh, believe me! In these awful moments, which have on occasion come to people in real life far more certainly and terribly than anything ever represented in fiction, believe me, God is ever at hand to send relief. The overstrung mind is not abandoned to itself: very, very



rarely indeed are our guardian angels absent, or unready to work by an earthly instrument.

It came to *me* in the person of Mr. Chandos. Ascending the stairs, a candle in his hand, softly whistling in unconcern, he came. It was no moment for deliberation : had it been a king or emperor, it had been all the same to me. With a great cry of anguish ; with a low prolonged shriek, that burst from me in the tension of nerves and brain ; with a clasp of his arm, as if I dare not let him go again, I laid hold of him ; dropping the book on the carpet of the gallery.

I suppose he put the wax-light down ; I suppose he got over his astonishment in some way : all I knew was that in a moment he was holding me in his arms, trying to soothe my sobbing. Reaction had come, and with it tears ; never before had I cried so violently ; and I clung to him still in an agony of terror, as one, drowning, clings to the living. But nothing remained in the gallery. Whatever had been in it had vanished.

“What is all this ? What has alarmed you ?”

“It was there, it was coming towards me !” I

whispered hysterically in answer. "O forgive me! Hold me! I feel as though I should die."

"What was coming?" he inquired.

"The same—I think—that is seen in the grounds. The ghost. I saw it."

"How can you be so foolish? how can you take up these absurd fancies?" he remonstrated, in a sharp tone, moving some steps away from me.

"I did, Mr. Chandos; I did. It came along with its arm raised, as if to warn me off: a tall skeleton of a form, with shadowy features the hue of the dead. Features that bear, in their formation, a great resemblance to yours."

Was it fancy? or was it fact?—that his own features, as I spoke, assumed an ashy tint, just as they had done when the police-officers came?

"What were you doing out here?" he asked, in the same sharp accent.

"I only came to the window-seat to get a book. I saw it as I turned to go back."

"You saw nothing," he persisted, with some warmth. "I am astonished at you, Miss Hereford: the fancy was the creation of your own

brain, and nothing more. Pray, if the ghost was here then, where is it now?"

"I don't know. It disappeared: I think it seemed to go back towards the west wing. It was certainly there."

"You are certainly silly," was his response. "A vast deal more so than I had given you credit for."

"Ah, Mr. Chandos, you cannot reason me out of my eyesight and my senses. Thank you, thank you ever for coming up the stairs just then: I do believe I should have died, or lost my reason."

Picking up the "Heir of Redclyffe," I walked to my room, went in, and shut the door. Mr. Chandos pulled it open again with a sharp pull.

"Forgive me if I have been harsh. Good night."

"Oh, yes, sir; I know how foolish it must seem to you. Good night."

"Go to rest in peace and safety, Anne. And be assured that no ill, ghostly or human, shall work you harm while I am at hand to prevent it."

I closed the door and bolted it, a vague idea in my mind that a bolted door is a better safeguard against a ghost than an unbolted one. Mr. Chandos's footsteps died away in the direction of the west wing.

With the morning, a little of the night's impression had vanished, for the sun was shining brilliantly. Ghosts and sunlight don't accord with each other; you cannot make them amalgamate. Ghosts at midnight *are* ghosts: in the warm and cheery morning sun they are of doubtful identity; or, at any rate, have vanished very far off, into unknown regions. I dressed myself as usual, in better spirits than might be supposed, and went down. Mr. Chandos was earlier than I, and stood at the window in the oak-parlour. He took my hand and retained it for some moments in silence, I standing side by side with him, and looking from the window as he did.

"And how is the ghost this morning, Anne?"

"I wish you would regard me as a rational being, Mr. Chandos! Do anything but treat me as a child."

"Nay, I think you proved yourself both irra-

tional and a child last night," he laughingly said.

"Indeed I did not. I wish you had seen what I did."

"I wish I had," was the mocking answer. "Anne, trust me: there is no ghost inside Chandos, whatever they may say as to there being one out of it."

"I don't know how I shall be able to go upstairs alone at night again."

"Nor I. You will want Hill and half-a-dozen lighted torches to escort you. Do you remember my remarking, that last evening, taking one event with another, was a sensational one? But I did not suppose it was to wind up with anything so grand as a ghost."

The mocking tone, the ridicule vexed me. It was as if he ridiculed me. In spite of my good sense and my good manners, the vexation appeared in my eyes.

"There! We will declare a truce Anne, and let the ghost drop. I don't want to make you angry with me."

"I am not angry, sir. I can never repay

all your kindness to me ; and especially that last one of coming to my relief last night."

"Which was accidental. Shall I tell you how you can repay it all, Anne?"

His voice dropped to earnest seriousness ; his eyes, a strangely-sad gravity seated in their depths, looked yearningly into mine.

"I wish you could, sir."

"Let this matter of your ghost be a perfect secret between you and me. One to be disclosed to no one."

"Certainly. I promise."

That some great reason prompted the request was unmistakeable : that there were certain interests attaching to this "ghost," whether it might walk out of doors or in, could but be apparent. A mysterious awe—pardon the words—pervaded the subject altogether ; and had from the moment I first entered Chandos. How I wished he would take me into his confidence !—if it were only that I might show him that I would be true and faithful. But for the strange reticence imposed by love when once it takes possession of the soul, I might have boldly suggested this.

He leaned out of the window, inhaling the crisp air of the bright October morning. Courage at length came to me to say a word.

“Of course, sir, I do not fail to see that there are interests here that involve caution and care, though I cannot think how, or what they are. If you would entrust me with them—and I could help in any way—I should be glad. I would be so true.”

“Ay, I am sure you would be. Latterly a vision has crossed me of a time—a possible future when it might be disclosed. But it is neither probable nor near. Indeed, it seems like a dream even to glance at it.”

He had been looking at the far-off skies as he spoke, as though *he* were in a dream. The urn was brought in, and I went to the table to make the tea. Newspapers and letters arrived; he was buried in them during breakfast, and carried them afterwards to his own sitting-room.

I saw his horse brought to the door in the course of the morning. In crossing the hall to go to it, he looked in at the oak-parlour. I was mending gloves.

“Hard at work! Do you wear mended gloves?”

“Everybody is not Mr. Chandos of Chandos. Poor governesses have to wear many things that the gay world does not. And Mrs. Paler has not paid me.”

“Shall I bring you some gloves home to-day?”

“Oh, no indeed; no, thank you, Mr. Chandos,” I answered, speaking and colouring much more vehemently than the occasion called for. “Are you going for a ride?”

“I am going to the police-station at Warsall, to endeavour to get a sight of that note.”

“Who could have written it? It seems so useless a hoax to have played.”

“Useless?—As it turned out, yes. But it strikes me the intention was neither harmless nor useless,” he added, in a thoughtful tone.

“Shall you not institute an inquiry into it, Mr. Chandos?”

“No. I shall pick up what there may be to pick up in a quiet way; but I shall make no stir in it. I have my reasons. Good-bye, Anne. Mind you mend those gloves neatly.”



“Good-bye, sir. Take care of Black Knave—that he does not throw you again.”

He went away laughing at his own remark on the gloves, or mine on Black Knave, went up to the west wing, and was down again in a minute. The horse was a favourite, and he patted him and spoke to him before mounting. The groom rode a bright bay horse; a fine animal also.

Surely there was no harm in my looking from the window to watch them away! But Mrs. Penn, who came into the oak-parlour at the moment, appeared to think there was. Her lips were drawn in and her brow had a frown on it as I turned to her. With that want of ceremony that distinguished her customary behaviour to me, she flung herself back in an easy-chair, her arms hanging down listlessly, her feet stretching out. Her gown was a bright muslin of beautiful hue and texture; her glowing hair had purple ribbons in it and black lace lappets.

“What a place this Chandos seems to be!” she exclaimed. “Did you ever see such a house, Miss Hereford? That visit of the police—riding up with their naked sabres!”

“The sabres were in their sheaths.”

“They clanked; I know that. I can tell you it gave me a turn. And after all, after terrifying us nearly to death, Mr. Chandos, I hear, entertained them amicably at supper.”

“It was as well to be civil; it was not their fault that they came. A trick had been played on them.”

“A trick? I don’t understand.”

“A note was written in Mr. Chandos’s name to the inspector of police at Warsall, asking for mounted officers to be sent over. They supposed they were coming to take into custody the person who has been playing tricks at Chandos. Tricks: that was the word used.”

Mrs. Penn stared at me. “Who wrote the note?”

“Mr. Chandos does not know. He received a note himself also last night, an anonymous one: insinuating that as you and I were the only strangers at Chandos, one of us must be the guilty person.”

“What next?” demanded Mrs. Penn, angrily taking up the words. “Does Mr. Chandos sup-

pose I stole my own lace and rifled my own letter? But it is only what I have anticipated.”

“Mr. Chandos knows better. I say it was the anonymous letter that suggested the idea to him. I thought it seemed to point more to me than to you.”

“Mr. Chandos would not admit the idea—would he?”

“Oh, no. I am quite easy on that score. Mr. Chandos knows he may trust me.”

Whether Mrs. Penn thought this remark seemed to reflect on herself; to shift the imputation on her, failing me, I could not tell; certainly no such thing had been in my mind. Her eyes grew angry: she rose from the chair, and shook her finger in my face.

“Anne Hereford, I have warned you once not to allow yourself to grow attached to Mr. Chandos; I now warn you again. There are reasons—I may not speak them—why it could bring you nothing but misery. Misery! It is but a faint word for it: disgrace, shame; more than you in your inexperience can imagine of evil. Better that you fell in love with the lowest man-

servant attached to the place, than with Harry Chandos."

The tell-tale crimson arose in my cheeks, and I bent to pick one of the late rose-buds, entwining themselves about the trellis-work outside.

"Child! should harm ever come of this, recollect that I did my best to warn you. I am older than you by many years; had I ever possessed a daughter, she might have been of your age."

"Thank you, Mrs. Penn," I gently said; "there is no cause to fear for me."

"Where has Mr. Chandos gone?"

"To Warsall. He would like to discover the writer of the note to the police."

"You seem to be quite in his confidence," remarked Mrs. Penn.

"He told me so much—that he intended to ride thither. It was no very great amount of confidence."

"There are many things I don't like in this house," she continued, after an interval of silence. "What do you suppose they did last night? Actually locked us up in the east wing! Turned

the key upon us ! I was coming forth to see if I could find out what those police were doing, and I found myself a prisoner ! Madam Hill's act and deed, that was."

" Indeed ! " was my reply, not choosing to tell her that I had heard the order given by Mr. Chandos.

" Hill takes a vast deal too much upon herself. I thought it could be no one else, and taxed her with it, asking how she could presume to lock up me. She coolly replied that she had never thought of me at all in the affair, but of Mrs. Chandos, who was of a timid nature, and would not like the sight of policemen inside the house. Poor thing ! she has cause," added Mrs. Penn, in a sort of self-soliloquy.

" Mrs. Chandos has ? "

" No unhappy prisoner escaped from Portland Island, hiding his head anywhere to elude notice, has more cause to dread the detective officers of justice than she. Your friend, Harry Chandos, has the same. I would not lead the life of apprehension he does, for untold gold. Look at the skeleton it makes of him ! he is consuming

away with inward fever. You were surprised when that London physician was brought down to him; the household were surprised: I was not."

"How came you to be so deep in their secrets?"

"Had I not been in their secrets, and shown them that I was, I should not have been admitted an inmate of that east wing," she answered. "Do you know, when the police came last night—but I had better hold my tongue, or I may say too much."

To avoid doing so, possibly, she quitted the room. But there were few women—as I believed—less likely than Mrs. Penn to be betrayed into speaking on impulse what it might not be expedient to speak.

The adventures of the day were not over for me. I wish they had been! I finished my gloves; I practised; I did a little German; and in the afternoon, when it was getting late, I strolled out with my book, the "Heir of Redclyffe," and sat down between the house and the lodges in a sheltered seat; where I could see who

passed to and from the house, without being seen.

The morning had been very lovely ; the evening was setting in less so ; a sighing wind whistled amidst the trees, clouds passed rapidly over the face of the sky, and the autumn leaves fell and were whirled about the paths. Did it ever strike you that there is something melancholy in these dying leaves ? Many people like autumn best of the four seasons ; but I think there is in it a great deal of sadness. It brings our own autumn of life too forcibly to the mind : as the leaves of the trees decay, and fall, and die ; so must we when our time shall come.

I was listening to the rustle of the leaves, and watching—if this is to be a true confession—for Mr. Chandos, when he rode by to the house. Inclination would have led me after him ; common sense and propriety kept me where I was. Presently, I saw Lizzy Dene advancing quietly along one of the dark and private paths. She wore her cloak and bonnet, and had a basket on her arm, as if she had been on an errand to the village. In a moment some gentleman had met

her and they were talking together. It was Edwin Barley. There were so many outlets from the broad walk that almost any of these private paths could be gained at will.

Lizzy Dene came on almost directly; she seemed to be in a hurry, and turned off towards the kitchens. The next to appear in the same walk was Mrs. Penn, striking right across the steps of Mr. Edwin Barley.

I was so sheltered by surrounding trees that they could not see me; but as they came nearer, walking side by side, Mrs. Penn's eye caught mine. She quickened her pace, and Mr. Edwin Barley turned back, raising his hat to her.

"Here you are with your book," she began. "Is it not too dark to see to read?"

"Almost. Have you been for a walk, Mrs. Penn?" I asked, hoping she'd not mention the name of Edwin Barley.

"I have been to the village post. I don't care to entrust my letters now to the hall-table. Did you notice a gentleman with me down there, Miss Hereford?"



"I think I did see some one walking with you. It is dark amid all those trees."

"I want to know his name," she continued, looking at me. "He has accosted me once or twice lately. A very civil, gentlemanly man."

"*Is he!* He has spoken to me, and I—I did not think him so. At least, I did not much like him. He lives in that house by the lodge-gates."

"Oh, then, it must be Mr. Edwin Barley, I suppose. Did you know his name?"

"Yes."

"He is a friend of the people here, I imagine. He stopped me just now and began asking after the health of Lady Chandos, as if he had an interest in it."

"I should not answer any of his questions at all, if I were you, Mrs. Penn."

"Why not?"

"You don't know anything of him, or what his motives may be for inquiry. I once heard Mr. Chandos warn him off these grounds; after that, he has no right to enter them. I think his doing so looks suspicious."

“I think you must be a suspicious young lady to fancy it,” returned Mrs. Penn with a laugh. “You were certainly born to be a *vieille fille*, Anne Hereford. They are always ultra-cautious.”

“I dare say I was.”

“When a gentleman—and a neighbour, as you now say he is—makes inquiries in passing after the invalids of the family you may be staying with, *I* do not see any harm in answering. One can’t turn away like a bear and say, I will not tell you.”

“As you please. I do not think Mr. Chandos would approve of your speaking to him.”

“Talking of Mr. Chandos, has he returned from that police errand yet?”

“I saw him ride past half an hour ago.”

“I must hasten home,” she returned, beginning to move away. “Mrs. Chandos cannot be left for long. I have run all the way back from the post, and I ran to it.”

What a strangely persevering man that Edwin Barley seemed to be! If Mrs. Penn knew—as she evidently did know—the dark secrets of the Chandos family, what might he not get out of

her? I nearly made up my mind to inform Mr. Chandos.

Alas for me! for my poor courage! Turning a sharp corner by the alcove to go home, I came upon him standing there; Edwin Barley. Was he waiting for me, or for Mrs. Penn? But she had gone by the other path. It was too late to retreat. I essayed to do it, but he placed himself in my way.

"Not so fast, young lady. I have been expecting you to come up: I saw you in the distance, and waited to exchange a word with you. Why! you won't be so discourteous as to refuse!"

"I cannot stay now, thank you."

"Oh, yes, you can—when I wish it. I want to inquire after the health of the family. There's no getting anything out of anybody: they 'can't tell me how my lady is, save from hearsay;' they 'never see her,' they 'see nearly as little of Mr. Chandos.' You and I can be more confidential."

"No, we cannot, sir. I never see Lady Chandos, any more than others do."

"Which you cannot say of Mr. Harry; you

see rather much of him," retorted Mr. Edwin Barley, with a parting of the lips that showed the subject vexed him. "You and he are together always—as the news is brought to me."

"Did Mrs. Penn tell you that?" I asked, my colour and my anger rising together.

"Mrs. Penn!"

"The lady you have just parted with," I answered, supposing he did not know her by name.

"Mrs. Chandos's companion? *She's* none too civil to me. You had a visit from the mounted police last evening; an unexpected one, rumour runs. Did their sudden appearance confound Mr. Harry Chandos?"

How he seemed to know things! Did he get them from mere rumour, or from Lizzy Dene? I remained silent.

"Did they bring, I ask, confusion to Mr. Chandos? Did he exhibit the aspect, the terror, of one who—who has been guilty of some great crime, and dreads to expiate it?"

"I cannot tell you, sir."

"You were with him, I know that much," he returned, in the same commanding, angry, im-

perative tone of voice I had once heard him use to my aunt Selina.

“But what if I was? I cannot say how Mr. Chandos felt or thought.”

“You *can*—if you choose. I asked you how he looked; what his manner betrayed: not what he felt or thought.”

Loving *him* as I did, bound to his interests, could I be otherwise than on my guard? Nevertheless there must have been that in my tone and look that carried doubt to Mr. Edwin Barley.

“Mr. Chandos spoke to the officers quite calmly, sir. They were admitted at once, and he invited them into the sitting-room.”

He looked at me keenly: I say, there must have been some doubt on his mind. “Are you aware that I know you, Anne? I think you must know me. As your uncle, your only living relative, I have a right to question you of these and other things.”

My heart beat violently. Nearly too sick to speak felt I: and the words shook as they issued from my lips.

"You are not my uncle, sir. Selina was my aunt, but——"

"And as Selina's husband, I became your uncle, Anne, by law. She is dead, but I am living: your uncle still. So you did know me?"

"I have known you, sir, ever since the day I first saw you here."

"It is more than I did by you, young lady; or I should not have allowed you to remain so quietly at Chandos. For the sake of my dead wife, I hold an interest in your welfare: and *that* will not be enhanced by your companionship with Harry Chandos."

The hint conveyed by the words half frightened me to death. *He* allow me! *he* assume a right to control me! I spoke out in my sick terror.

"You cannot have any power over me or my actions, Mr. Edwin Barley."

"Indeed I have, Anne. The law would say so. Do you know who Mrs. Penn is?" he abruptly asked.

"I don't know who Mrs. Penn is or where she comes from," was my quick reply, glad he had put a question at last that I could answer honestly.

"Will you please to let me go, sir? it is getting dark."

"Not just yet. You must first reply to a question or two I wish to ask touching Harry Chandos. To begin with: does he go often from home?"

Sick, faint, weak, though I was, I had presence of mind to put up one little sentence of prayer to be helped to do right: and that right I knew lay in denying him all information.

"I cannot tell you anything whatever about Mr. Chandos—or what he does—or what any one else does. As long as I am in the family, protected by them, trusted by them, it is dishonourable even to listen to such questions. But indeed I know nothing. If the Chandos family have secrets, they do not tell them to me."

"I should not imagine they would. I am not asking you for secrets. There are reasons why I wish to learn a little of their ordinary every-day doings. This, at any rate, is a simple question: Does Mr. Harry Chandos——."

"It is of no use, sir; I will not answer that or any other. Pray do not stop me again! I

hope you will pardon me for reminding you that I heard Mr. Chandos desire you not to intrude on these grounds: I think you ought to obey him, sir."

His face, always stern, grew fierce in its anger. Perhaps it was only natural that it should. He raised his hand before me.

"I hold the Chandoses under my finger and thumb. A little movement" (here he closed them) "and they may go trooping out of the kingdom to hide their disgrace; your friend, Mr. Harry, with all his high and mighty pride, leading the van. It will not be long first. By the obedience you owed your Aunt Selina, my dead wife, by the tenderness for her cherished memory, I order you to speak. You must do so, Anne."

One single moment of hesitation—I am ashamed to confess to it; but his voice and manner were so solemn—and my resolve returned, fixed and firm.

"I have said that I will not, now or ever."

He laid hold of me by the two arms as if he were going to shake me; his angry face, with its



beautiful white teeth—he always showed them when in anger—close to mine. You see, the old fear I used to have of him as a child clung to me still, and I shrieked out loud twice in my terror. I had always been wanting in presence of mind.

It all passed in a moment. *What* I hardly knew. There was a crash as if the slender hedge gave way; and Mr. Chandos was holding me behind him, having flung Mr. Edwin Barley back against the opposite tree.

## CHAPTER III.

### MRS. PENN'S REVELATION.

AGAINST the tree to which the powerful push had flung him, he stood quietly. There had been no blow. Mr. Chandos had but come between us, calmly put me behind him, laid his hand on Mr. Edwin Barley's chest, and pushed him backwards. These very slender, delicate-looking men sometimes possess unusual strength—as he did. Edwin Barley, in an encounter, would have been as a reed in his hand.

Neither of them seemed in a passion: at least their manner did not betray it. Mr. Chandos's face was a little paler than common; it was stern, haughty, and its nostrils were working; but otherwise he looked cool and collected. And Mr. Edwin Barley stood gazing at him, a strange look of conscious power in his eye and lip.

“How dare you presume to molest this young

lady?" were the first words of Mr. Chandos.

"What do you mean by it?"

"As to 'molesting,' I do not understand the term, as applied to Miss Hereford," returned Mr. Edwin Barley, with cool equanimity. "I possess the right to talk to her, and touch her; you don't. Neither possess you the right to protect her: I do. What relative may she be of yours?"

"None. But she is my mother's guest."

"None; just so. She is my niece."

Mr. Chandos, with a gesture of astonishment, looked in my face for confirmation or refutation. He got neither. I only clung to him for protection, the tears running down my cheeks.

"She has no protecting relative save myself; she has no other relative, so far as I know, or she knows, in the world, save a lad younger than she is," pursued Mr. Edwin Barley, no anger in his tone, only the firmness of conscious power. "My niece, I tell you, sir."

"Whatever she may be, she is residing under my mother's roof, and as such, is in my charge.

If you ever dare to touch her against her will again, sir, I will horsewhip you."

Mr. Chandos held his riding-whip in his hand as he spoke (he had brought it out by chance), and it trembled ominously. Mr. Edwin Barley drew back his lips: not in laughter, in all he did he was in earnest, and his teeth were momentarily seen. Few could boast a set so white and beautiful.

"Harry Chandos, you know that you will one day have to pay for your incivility."

"I know nothing of the sort; and if I did, the Chandoses are not given to calculation. I can tell you what you shall be made to pay for, Mr. Edwin Barley—the trespassing upon my domains. I warned you off them once; I will not warn you again—the law shall do it for me."

"*Your* domains!" retorted Mr. Edwin Barley.

"Yes, sir, mine," was the haughty answer. "They are mine so long as I am the representative of Sir Thomas Chandos. Have the goodness to quit them now, or I will call my servants to escort you."

Whatever Mr. Edwin Barley might do pri-

vately, he knew he had no legal right to remain within the domains of Chandos, when ordered off them, and he was not one openly to defy usages. He moved away in the direction of the gates ; turning his head to speak at about the third step, and halting as he did so.

“The law, so far, lies with you at present, Mr. Harry Chandos. A short while, and perhaps it will lie with me, in a matter far more weighty. As to you, Anne, I shall officially claim you.”

Nothing else was said. Mr. Chandos watched him to the turning of the dark walk, then walked by my side to the house, flicking the shrubs with his whip.

“I happened to have it with me,” he said, whether addressing the whip, or me, or the air, was not clear. “I was fastening the handle, which had got loose. *Is that man your uncle ?*”

He turned to me full now, a look of stern pain on his pale, proud face. The tears gushed forth again at the question ; I was wishing my heart could break.

“Oh no, no ; indeed I am no blood-relation of his.”

Mr. Chandos went on without another word. I thought he was despising me : would think that I had been in league with his enemy, Edwin Barley. I who had pretended not to know him !

The cloth was laid in the oak-parlour, but there were no lights yet. Mr. Chandos flung his whip into a corner, and stood in the shade of the curtain. I went up to him, feeling very hysterical.

“Do not misjudge me, Mr. Chandos. I will tell you all, if you please, after dinner. I should have told you before but that I have felt so frightened at Mr. Edwin Barley.”

“Since when have you felt frightened?”

“Since I was a little girl. I had not seen him for a good many years until I saw him here at Chandos, and I was afraid to speak of him—afraid also that he would recognise me.”

“He says he can claim you. Is that an idle boast?”

“I don’t know ; I don’t understand English

laws. Perhaps he might, but I would a great deal rather die."

The tears were falling down my face, lifted to his in its yearning for pity and forgiveness. Mr. Chandos bent towards me, a strange look of tenderness in his earnest eyes. I think he was going to lay his kind hand on my shoulder to assure me of his care, when at that moment some one passed the window, whom I took to be Edwin Barley. It was but the gardener—as I learned later—he had put on his coat to go home; a short, dark man walking past, and the dusk was deceptive. I thought Edwin Barley had come to take me there and then.

For the minute I was certainly not in my proper senses: terror alone reigned. I laid hold of Mr. Chandos in hysterical excitement, clinging to him as one clings for dear life.

"Oh, keep me, keep me! Do not let him take me! Mr. Chandos! Mr. Chandos! I know you are angry with me and despise me; but do not give me up to him!"

Before I had done speaking he had me in his arms, holding me closely to his breast. We stood

there in the shade of the dark room, heart beating wildly against heart.

“I wish I could give myself the right to keep you from him, and from every other ill,” he breathed. “Do you know, Anne, that I love you above all else in the world?”

I—I made no answer, save that I did turn my face a little bit towards his; but I should have liked to remain where I was for ever.

“But, my darling, it can only end here as it has begun; for I cannot marry. My brother, Sir Thomas, does not marry.”

I looked at him. He saw that I would have asked why.

“Because we ought not: it would not be right. There are dark clouds hanging over Chandos: should they open, it would be to hurl down desolation and disgrace. How can either of us, he or I, think of exposing a wife to encounter this? Could I in honour do it?”

“It might be happier for you, if this sorrow should arrive, to have one with you to soothe your cares and share them.”



“And there is one who would not shrink from it,” he said, tenderly, the tears standing in his eyes. “Had I not seen that, Anne, I should have been as much knave as fool to confess to my own state of feeling. For some days past I have been thinking it might be better to speak ; that I owed as much to you ; to speak and have done with it. Before I knew my danger, love had stolen over me, and it was too late to guard against it. It has not been our fault : we were thrown together.”

He took some impassioned kisses from my face. I let him take them. I’m afraid I did not think whether it was right or wrong ; I’m not sure that I cared which it was : I only know that I felt as one in a blissful dream.

“I have been betrayed into this, Anne,” he said, releasing me. “I ought to beg your pardon in all humility. It is not what I intended : though I might just tell you of my love, I never thought to give you tokens of it. Will you forgive me ?”

He held out his hand. I put mine into it, the silent tears running down my blushing face.

“Do not fear a similar transgression for the future. The fleeting moment over, it is over for good. I would give half my remaining existence, Anne, to be able to marry, to make you my wife; but it cannot be. Believe me, my darling, it *cannot*. No, though you are my darling, and will be for ever.”

“Oh look! look at this! It is from your hand! What has happened to it?”

On my dress of white sprigged muslin, there were two red stains, wet. The straps of his hand had become loosened, perhaps in the encounter with Mr. Edwin Barley, and it had burst out bleeding again. I ran upstairs to put on another dress, leaving Mr. Chandos to attend to his hand.

Oh, but I was in a glow of happiness! He had said he could not marry. What was marriage to me? Had there been no impediment on his side, there might have been one on mine: a poor friendless young governess was no match for Mr. Chandos of Chandos. He loved me: that was quite enough for present bliss; and, as it seemed to me, for future.

Mr. Chandos presided at dinner as usual, himself once more ; calm, collected, courteous, and gentlemanly. The servants in waiting could never have suspected he had been making me a declaration of love, and pressing kisses on my lips not many minutes before.

“ Did you get to see the letter at Warsall ? ” I asked, when the servants had left again, and silence was growing for me too self-conscious.

“ Yes, but I don’t know the handwriting. It looks like a lady’s. They let me bring the note home ; I’ll show it you presently. Talking of that——”

Without concluding, he rose, went to a side-table, and brought me a box, done up in paper.

“ There ! Don’t say I forget you.”

It contained gloves ; a good many pairs. Beautiful French gloves of all colours ; some dark and useful, others delicate and rare. But I thought it would not be right to accept them, and the tell-tale pink flushed my cheeks.

“ Don’t scruple ; they are not from me. Look at the bit of writing paper.”

I pulled it out of the box. A few words were

on it, pencilled by Lady Chandos, asking me to wear the gloves.

“It happened that I was going to buy some for my mother to-day. When I went up to her after Black Knave was brought round, I told her Miss Hereford had no gloves left, and she asked me to get you some. There, Miss Hereford.”

I supposed I might wear them now. The blushes changed to crimson, and I began putting on a glove to cover my confusion. Mr. Chandos ate his grapes with his usual equanimity.

“Six and a half. How did you guess my size?”

“By your hand. I had seen it, and felt it.”

As if jealous of the interview—it seemed so to me at the moment—Hill came in to break it. Lady Chandos wanted him in the west wing.

He went up at once. I sat thinking of all that had occurred. Would Mr. Edwin Barley indeed claim me? *Could* he? Would the law allow him? A shiver took me at the thought.

The tea waited on the table when he came down again. It seems very monotonous, I feel sure, to be alluding so continually to the meals, but you see they were the chief times when I

was alone with Mr. Chandos ; so I can only crave pardon.

Mr. Chandos's countenance wore a sad and gloomy look : but that was nothing unusual after his visits to the west wing. I wondered very much that he did not have the shutters closed after what took place the previous night : but there they were open, and nothing between the room and the window but the thin lace curtains. The oak-brown silk curtains, with their golden flowers, were at the extreme corners of the windows, not made to draw. Long afterwards I found that he had the shutters left open because I was there. As the habit had been to leave them open previously, he did not choose to alter it now : people inclined to be censorious, might have remarked upon it. That aspect of the affair never occurred to me.

“ What led to the scene with that man to-day ? ” he abruptly asked, after drinking his cup of tea in silence. “ How came you to meet him ? ”

I briefly explained. Mentioning also that I had seen Mrs. Penn with him, and what she

said to me of his inquiries. And I told him of Mr. Edwin Barley's questions to me about the visit of the police-officers.

"If Mrs. Penn is to make an acquaintance of Mr. Edwin Barley, she cannot remain at Chandos," he coldly remarked. "Have you finished tea? Then it shall go away."

He rose to ring the bell, did not resume his seat again, but stood with his back to the fire, and watched the servants take the things away. I got my work about as usual.

"Now, then, Anne, I claim your promise. What are you to Edwin Barley? and what is he to you?"

A moment's pause. But I had made my mind up to tell him all, and would not flinch now the moment had come. Putting down the work, I sat with my hands on my lap.

"Did you know that there was once a Mrs. Edwin Barley?"

"Unfortunately I had too good cause to know it."

I thought the answer a strange one, but went on.

"She was a Carew. Miss Selina Carew, of Keppe-Carew."

"I know she was."

"And my aunt."

"Your aunt !" he repeated, looking at me strangely. "Why, whose daughter are you?"

"My father was Colonel Hereford. A brave officer and gentleman."

"Thomas Hereford ? Of the —th?"

"Yes."

"And your mother?"

"My mother was Miss Carew of Keppe-Carew. She was a good deal older than Selina. They were sisters."

The information appeared to surprise him beyond expression. He sat down in a chair in front of me, his eyes fixed on my face with an earnest gaze.

"The daughter of Colonel Hereford and of Miss Carew of Keppe-Carew ! And we have been thinking of you as only a governess ! Je vous en fais mes compliments empressés, Miss Hereford ! You are of better family than ours."

“That does me no good. I have still to be a governess.”

“Does it not, young lady? Well—about Mrs. Edwin Barley. Did you see much of her?”

“Not much until the last. I was there when she died.”

“There! At Edwin Barley’s! She died at his place near Hallam.”

“Yes.” And I gave him the outline of what had taken me there: to spend the short interval between mamma’s death and my being placed at school.

“You must have heard of a—a tragedy”—he spoke the words in a hesitating, unwilling manner—“that occurred there about the same time. A young man, a ward of Edwin Barley’s, died.”

“Philip King. Yes, he was killed. I saw it done, Mr. Chandos.”

“Saw what done?”

“Saw Philip King murdered. That’s not a nice word to repeat, but it is what they all called it at the time. I was in the wood. I saw the shot strike him, and watched him fall.”



"Why, what a strange girl you are!" Mr. Chandos exclaimed, after a pause of astonishment. "What else have you seen?"

"Nothing like that. Nothing half so dreadful. I trust I never shall."

"I trust not, either. Anne," he continued, dropping his voice to a low, solemn tone, "you say you saw that shot strike him. *Who fired it?*"

"It was said to be—but perhaps I ought not to mention the name even to you, Mr. Chandos," I broke off. "Mrs. Hemson cautioned me never to repeat it under any circumstances."

"Who is Mrs. Hemson?"

"She was also once a Miss Carew of Keppe-Carew. Her father was John Carew; and my grandfather, Hubert Carew, succeeded him. She married Mr. Hemson; he was in trade, and the Carews did not like it: but oh, Mr. Chandos, he is one of the noblest of gentlemen in mind and manners."

"As I have heard my mother say. Go on, Anne."

"After Mrs. Edwin Barley died, I was sent to Mrs. Hemson's at Dashleigh; she had under-

taken the charge of fixing on a school for me. It was she who told me not to mention the name."

"You may mention it to me. Was it George Heneage?"

"You know it, then, Mr. Chandos!"

"I know so much—as the public in general knew. They said it was George Heneage; a gentleman staying there at the time. Did you see who it was that fired the shot? Pray answer me."

"I did not see it fired: but I think it was George Heneage. Quite at first I doubted, because—but never mind that. I did not doubt afterwards, and I think it was certainly George Heneage."

"‘Never mind’ will not do for me, Anne. I mind it all; have too much cause; and from me you must conceal nothing. Why did you at first doubt that it was George Heneage?"

"I saw Mr. Edwin Barley coming from the direction where the shot was fired, with his gun in his hand, and I wondered at the moment whether he had done it. I used to feel afraid of

him ; I did not like him ; and he disliked George Heneage."

"Did you hear or know the cause of his dislike of George Heneage?"

"I gathered it," I answered, feeling my face flush.

"Mrs. Edwin Barley was beautiful, was she not?" he asked, after a pause.

"Very beautiful."

"Are you anything like her?"

I could not help laughing. I like Selina!

"Not one bit. She had a very fair, piquante face, light and careless, with blue eyes and a mass of light curling hair."

"Do you remember George Heneage?" he continued, stooping for something as he asked the question.

"No ; not his face. When I try to recall it, it always seems to slip from me. I remember thinking him good-looking. He was very tall. Charlotte Delves called him a scarecrow ; but I thought she disliked him because Mr. Edwin Barley did."

"Who was Charlotte Delves?"

“She lived there. She was distantly related to Mr. Edwin Barley. Jemima—one of the maids—once said that Charlotte Delves liked Mr. Edwin Barley too well to be just.”

“I remember hearing of her—of some relation, at least, who was in the house at the time,” he observed in a dreamy sort of tone. “Delves? perhaps that was the name. A candid, pleasant-mannered, lady-like woman—as described to me.”

“I don’t recollect much about her, or what she was like, except that she was very kind to me after my Aunt Selina’s death. It is a good while ago, and I was only a little girl.”

“Ay. But now, Anne, I want you to relate to me all the particulars of that bygone miserable tragedy: anything and everything that you may remember as connected with it. Understand me: it is not curiosity that prompts me to ask it. Were I to consult my own wishes, I would bury the whole in a stream of Lethe; every word spoken of it is to me so much agony. Nevertheless, you may do me a service if you will relate what you know of it.”

“I would tell you willingly, Mr. Chandos.

But—I fear—I—should have to seem to cast blame on Selina.”

“You cannot cast so much blame on her as has already been cast on her to me. Perhaps your account may tend to remove the impression it left on my mind.”

I began at the beginning, and told him all, so far as I could recollect, giving my childish impressions of things. I told him also my own early history. When I came to the details of Philip King’s death, Mr. Chandos sat with his elbow on the arm of the chair, his face turned from me and buried in his hand.

“You saw George Heneage just afterwards?” he remarked.

“Yes. He was hiding in the wood, trembling all over, and his face very white.”

“Had he the look of a guilty man?”

“I think he had. Had he not been guilty, why should he not have come openly forward to succour Philip King?”

“True. Did Mrs. Edwin Barley deem him guilty?”

“Not at first. I don’t know what she

might have done later. Mr. Edwin Barley did."

"As he took care to let the world know. Go on with your narrative, Anne. I ought not to have interrupted it."

I went on to the end. Mr. Chandos heard me without comment; and remained so long silent that I thought he was never going to speak again.

"Has George Heneage ever been heard of, do you happen to know, Mr. Chandos?"

"It is said not."

"Then I think he must be dead. Or perhaps he has kept out of the country. Mr. Edwin Barley said at the time that he would bring him to justice, were it years and years to come."

"Mr. Edwin Barley was excessively bitter against him. He, Barley, succeeded to Philip King's fine property. Were I on the jury when George Heneage was brought to trial, I should require strong proof—stronger than Mr. Edwin Barley's word—ere I convicted him."

"Mr. Edwin Barley did not shoot him," I said, gravely.

"I do not accuse him; I feel sure he did not.

But there were one or two private doubts entertained upon the matter ; I can tell you that, Anne. He was suspiciously eager in his accusations of George Heneage !”

“ Think of his provocation ! Selina and George Heneage had both lived only to provoke him ; and people said he was really attached to Philip King.”

“ Good arguments, Anne. I believe I am unjust in all that relates to Edwin Barley.”

“ But why should you be, Mr. Chandos ? Don’t you think it must have been George Heneage who did the murder ?”

“ I beg you will not use that ugly word, Anne. My full and firm belief is that it was an accident—nothing more.”

“ Then why should George Heneage stay away ?”

“ A natural question. Of course we cannot answer for what George Heneage does or does not do. Were he to appear in England, Mr. Edwin Barley would instantly cause him to be apprehended ; there’s no doubt of that ; innocent or guilty, he must stand his trial ; and to some

men that ordeal would be just as bad as conviction. Besides, he might not be able to prove that it was but an accident ; I think he would not be ; and, failing that proof, he would be condemned. In saying this, I am not seeking to defend George Heneage."

"Did you ever see George Heneage, Mr. Chandos?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you knew him?"

He made no reply ; but rose from his seat and began to pace the room.

"About that will of Mrs. Edwin Barley's, Anne?" he presently asked. "Did her husband destroy it?"

If I had thought so as a child, and thought so still, it was not possible for me to say it ; but Mr. Chandos had acquired a habit of reading what I hesitated to speak.

"I see ; you think it better not to avow dangerous doctrines."

"Indeed, I should be grieved to know that he really took it. Its disappearance was very strange."



“ You don’t think he took it ; you only had an instinct that way. But, Anne, your instincts are generally true ones. Mr. Barley has the character of being a hard, grasping man, loving money better than anything else in the world, except the bringing to punishment of George Heneage. He could not bear for the little trifle to go beside him ; compared to his large property, it was but what a drop of water is to the wide ocean. He did not want it, you did ; you have but little.”

“ I have nothing, nothing but what I earn. Mamma sunk for my education the trifle of money she had saved.”

“ But—the daughter of Colonel Hereford ought to enjoy a pension,” he debated, stopping short in his walk.

“ Papa sold out previous to his death.”

“ Oh, I see,” and he resumed his walk.

“ Mr. Chandos, may I ask you a question ?”

“ You know you may. I will answer it if I can.”

“ What has Mr. Edwin Barley to do with you ? Why should he be your enemy ?”

“That is what I cannot answer,” he quickly rejoined. “He is an implacable enemy to me and my family; and likely ever to remain so. I cannot divest myself of the idea that he was the author of that visit we were favoured with last night by the police. Between the two—him and his wife—we have suffered enough. I should be puzzled to say which of them did us most harm, Miss Hereford.”

Miss Hereford! And I was the Barleys’ relative! My heart felt sick and faint within me.

“Well, what now?” asked Mr. Chandos, who happened to be looking, and he came up and stood close before me.

“Nothing, sir, nothing; only I cannot help Selina’s having been my aunt. Perhaps you will never care to be kind to me again.”

His eyes, so grave before, quite danced with their pleasant light. He laid his hand gently on my shoulder.

“Anne, the only kind thought I have had of your aunt Selina is since I knew she was of your kindred. If——”

I pushed his hand away from me. I rose

with a vivid blush. Inside the door, having come in so quietly as to be unheard, stood Mrs. Penn. Mr. Chandos turned, a haughty frown on his brow.

“I beg your pardon, madam ; do you want anything?”

“I beg yours, sir, for my intrusion ;” she answered, civilly. “I only had a little errand with Miss Hereford. Will you”—turning to me—“kindly let me have my embroidery scissors, if you have done with them?”

I took them from my basket and gave them to her. “Thank you, Mrs. Penn, for the loan of them. They cut my strip of work nicely.”

“It is a chilly evening,” she remarked, moving to depart. “I fancy we are going to have rain.”

Mr. Chandos opened the door for her, and when she left slipped the bolt. Ere he was half way across the room on his return, however, he went back and undid it, some reflection appearing to strike him. His brow was stern and displeased.

“That Mrs. Penn is a curious woman !”

“Curious ! In what way, sir ? Do you mean her hair ?”

He slightly laughed. "I spoke the word literally, Anne. She came in, I fancy, just to see what was going on, the scissors being the excuse."

"She complains of its being so dull in the east wing. I think she is glad to escape from it for a moment when she can."

"Ay, no doubt; we must not be harsh upon her. She is a contrast to Mrs. Freeman, who never put herself into anybody's way. I wish I could discover the author of these losses in the house," he continued, passing to another subject. "Had it been alone the looking into letters or stealing them, I might have suspected Edwin Barley. That is, that some one was at work for him here. That he would like to get my private memoranda into his fingers, and peep at my letters, I know; but he could have no possible motive for causing lace and money to be stolen."

My head was full of Lizzy Dene, and I thought the time had come for me to speak. Ah, what would I not tell him in the bond of confidence that seemed to be established between us.

"But, Mr. Chandos—suppose, for argument's

sake—that he has an agent in the house ; suppose that it is a woman, that agent may be transacting a little business on her own account while she does his.”

Mr. Chandos came and stood before me.  
“ Have you a motive in saying this ? ”

“ Yes. I think, I do think, if there is one, that it is Lizzy Dene.”

Of course, having said so much, I told all. Of the interview that some one (I suspected Lizzy Dene) had held with Edwin Barley in the grounds ; the chance meeting they had held that afternoon. Mr. Chandos was terribly displeased, but still he could not—I saw it—be brought to believe that it was Dene.

“ You have great faith in her, Mr. Chandos ? ”

“ I have, because I believe Lizzy Dene to be of true and honest nature ; I do not think her capable of acting as a spy, or any other false part. She is an inveterate gossip ; she is superstitious, and looks after ghosts ; but I believe her to be faithful to the back-bone.”

It was no use to contend ; he had his opinion, I had mine. To look at Lizzy’s face, to listen

to her voice, I should have thought her honest too ; but I could not shut my eyes to facts and circumstances. Mr. Chandos rang for Hill.

“ I want to say a word to Lizzy Dene, Hill ; incidentally, you understand. Can you contrive to send her here on some ostensible errand ? ”

Hill nodded her head and withdrew. Presently Lizzy Dene came in with a knock and a curtsy ; she went to the sideboard and began looking in it for something that appeared difficult to find. Mr. Chandos, standing with his back to the fire, suddenly accosted her ; she had got her head nearly inside one of the sideboard cupboards.

“ How long have you known Mr. Edwin Barley, Lizzy ? ”

“ Known who, sir, did you ask ? ” she returned, standing up and looking round at him.

“ Mr. Edwin Barley.”

“ I don’t know him at all, sir,” she replied, after a minute’s pause, given apparently to surprise and consideration. “ Not but what I seem to have heard that name—lately, too.”

“ He is the new tenant at the house outside the gates.”

“Dear ! yes, to be sure ! Two of the men were talking of him one day ; that was the name, for I remember I said it put me in mind of the fields. I have seen him once or twice, sir ; a short, dark man.”

“Where did you first see him ?”

“It was coming home from church one Sunday, sir. We were crossing the road to the gates, me and Robin, and Harriet, when I noticed a swarthy gentleman standing stock-still and staring at us. ‘I hope he’ll know us again,’ said I, ‘he’s ugly enough.’ ‘Hush !’ says Robin, ‘that’s master’s new tenant at the house there !’”

“Have you spoken to him ?” inquired Mr. Chandos.

“Well, sir, if you can call it speaking, I have. This evening, as I was coming home, I met him in one of the walks. He wished me good evening, and asked how my lady was. I stood to answer him, saying my lady was still very ill. That’s all, sir.”

“Has he spoken to you at any other time ?”

“No, sir, never. I had forgot his name, sir, till you mentioned it now.”

She did seem to speak truthfully, and Mr. Chandos looked at me. Lizzy, finding nothing more was asked, turned to the sideboard again, and presently quitted the room.

“The traitor is not Lizzy Dene, Anne!”

Certainly it did not appear to be. I felt puzzled. Mr. Chandos continued his walk, and the clock struck ten. Putting up my work, I held out my hand to wish him good night, and took courage to speak out the question lying so heavily on my heart.

“Do you think, sir, Mr. Edwin Barley can really claim me?”

“I cannot tell, Anne. At any rate he would have, I imagine, to make you first of all a ward in chancery, and get himself appointed guardian; and that would take time.”

“He could not come into your house and take me forcibly out of it?”

“Certainly not; and I—acting for Lady Chandos—will take very good care he does not do it.”

“Good night, sir!”

“It is to be ‘sir,’ to the end—is it? Good



night, Anne," he went on, shaking me by the hand. "I wish I dare offer you a different good night from this formal one! I wish I could feel justified in doing it."

I don't know what I stammered; something foolish and incoherent; and in tone, at any rate, full of my depth of love.

"No, it may not be," he answered, very decisively. "If a wavering crossed my mind before, when I thought you—forgive me, Anne—an unpretending governess-girl, as to whether I should lay the good and the ill before you, and let you decide, it has passed now. The daughter of Colonel Hereford and of Miss Carew of Keppe-Carew, must not be trifled with. Good night, child!"

The tears were streaming down my cheeks when I entered my bedroom. Had Mr. Chandos cast me off for ever? Since that unlucky remark of his, that my family was better than his own, I know not what sweet visions of rose-colour had been floating in my mind. I *was* of good descent, with a lady's breeding and education; surely, if he could forgive my want of money and my

having lived as a dependent at Mrs. Paler's, there had been no very great barrier between me and a younger brother of Chandos !

Dwelling upon this, my tears blinding me, it startled me to see Mrs. Penn quietly seated in my room. She pointed to the door.

“ Shut it and bolt it, Miss Hereford. I have been waiting to talk to you !”

I shut it, but did not slip the bolt. Where was the necessity ? Nobody ever came into my room at night—Mrs. Penn excepted.

“ Come and sit down, and tell me why you are crying !”

“ I am not crying. I have no cause to cry,” I resentfully answered, vexed beyond everything. “ I thought of something as I came upstairs, which brought the tears into my eyes : we often laugh until we cry, you know.”

“ Oh, indeed,” said Mrs. Penn, “ perhaps yours are tears of joy ?”

“ I should be so very much obliged if you could put off what you wish to say until the morning. You don't know how sleepy I am.”

“ I know that you can tell a parcel of fibs,

you wicked child," she returned in a fond accent. "Anne,—I shall call you so to-night,—I have come to talk to you; and, talk I shall. I want to save you."

"Save me from what?"

"From the—what shall I call it?—the machinations of Harry Chandos."

"Mr. Chandos is working no machinations against me."

"I know that he *is*. He has been making you a declaration of love."

The tell-tale crimson lighted up my face. Mrs. Penn continued, taking my hand.

"I felt uneasy, and made my scissors an excuse for coming to the oak-parlour. You should not have heard it from him. I warned you that any attachment between you and Mr. Chandos could not end happily; you cannot marry him!"

My nerves were completely unstrung, and I burst into tears; I could play a false part no longer. It was bitter enough to hear her confirm his own words. Mrs. Penn gently stroked my hair.

"Child, do you know why I thus interfere

between you and Mr. Chandos? I will tell you. A few years ago I became attached to a young girl of eighteen—a connection of mine. She was under my charge and under my eye; her name, Lottie Penn. A stranger came, fascinating as Mr. Chandos; and I, believing him to be upright and honourable, exercised little caution. He gained her love, just as Mr. Chandos is gaining yours—”

“Mrs. Penn!”

“Hush! do you think I am blind? He gained the love of Lottie; and, when marriage came to be spoken of as a natural sequence, we found out that we had been entertaining a Jesuit in disguise. He could not marry.”

“A Jesuit?”

“I am speaking metaphorically. The man called himself a Protestant, if he called himself anything. I heard him say he was a Christian. Very Christian work it was of him to gain Lottie’s heart, and then confess that he had gained it for no end. Lottie died. The blow was too sharp for her. She was a timid, gentle flower, and could not stand the rough blast. Anne, believe

me; there is no fate so cruel in the whole catalogue of the world's troubles, as that of misplaced love."

"Why could he not marry?" I asked, growing interested in the tale.

"Ah! why, indeed!" she answered, curling her lips with mockery: "why cannot Harry Chandos? The cases are somewhat parallel. It is the remembrance of Lottie which causes me to feel this interest in you, for you put me very much in mind of her, and I must try to save you."

"There is nothing to save me from!" I answered, touched with her kindness, and feeling ashamed of myself not to be more touched with it than I was. "I am not likely to marry Mr. Chandos, or to be asked to marry him!"

"My dear, I don't think I can be deceived. There *is* love between you!"

"You did not finish about Lottie," I said, evading the question. "Why could he not marry her?"

"Because he had a wife living, from whom he was separated."

"At least, Mr. Chandos has not that."

She remained silent, only looked at me. I am not sure but an idea struck me that the silence was strange. I could never tell afterwards whether or not it so struck me *then*.

"I said the cases were somewhat parallel," she slowly observed.

"Scarcely, Mrs. Penn. Mr. Chandos at least does not deceive me. He says he cannot marry. His life is given up to sorrow."

"Given up to sorrow? He says that, does he? Anne, I have half a mind to tell you the truth. What is his sorrow, compared to that of poor Mrs. Chandos. I pity *her*."

"Who *is* Mrs. Chandos?" I interrupted, seizing on the opportunity to inquire on the subject that remained a puzzle, and thinking this kind woman might satisfy me. "They call her Lady Chandos's daughter-in-law, but I cannot see how she can be so."

"Mrs. Chandos was once Miss Ethel Wynne."

"But who is her husband?"

“Ah, *you* may well ask. It is curious though that you should.”

Was it the stress on the word “you”?—was it that her face was so suggestive as it gazed into mine?—or was it that the previous vague idea was growing into life? I knew not; I never have known. I only felt that I turned sick with an undefined doubt and dread as I waited for Mrs. Penn’s answer. She was a full minute, looking into my whitening face, before she gave it.

“My poor stricken lamb! Has it never struck you who it might be? Speak.”

Speak! I put up my trembling hand as if to beat off her words. That unholy idea—yes, it did seem to me unholy in those first confused moments—was growing into a great monster of fear. Mrs. Penn looked as if she could not take in enough of the signs.

“What if her husband were Harry Chandos?”

With the strange noise surging in my ears—with my pulses standing cold and still, and then coursing on to fever-heat,—with my temples

beating to burning pain—no wonder I could not weigh my words.

“Oh, Mrs. Penn! Do not tell it me!”

“Think you that you need telling, Anne? I can add something more. Never will Harry Chandos love again in this world, you or any-one else, as passionately as he once loved Ethel Wynne.”

My senses were getting confused; as if I no longer understood things. She went on.

“Husband and wife live apart sometimes, although they may inhabit the same roof. She and Harry Chandos parted; it is years ago now; she used him very ill; and I don’t suppose he has ever so much as touched her hand since, save in the very commonest courtesies of everyday life: and that only when he could not help himself. Passion has long been over between them; they are civil when they meet; nothing more. My poor child, you look ready to fall.”

I did fall. But not until she left the room. I fell on the ground, and let my head lie there



in my shock of misery. Much that had been obscure before seemed to shine out clearly now ; things to which I had wanted a clue, appeared to be plain. I wished I could die, there as I lay, rather than have found him out in deceit so despicable.

## CHAPTER IV.

### NOTHING BUT MISERY.

THE sun shone brightly into my room in the morning, but there would be no more day's sun for me. What a night I had passed! If you have ever been deceived in the manner I had, you will understand it; if not, all the writing in the world [would fail to convey to you a tithe of the misery that was mine—and that would be mine for years to come. *Her* husband! whilst he pretended to love *me*!

All my study would now be to avoid Mr. Chandos. Entirely I could not; for we must meet at the daily repasts when he chose to sit down to them. In that I could not help myself. I was very silent that morning, and he was busy with his newspapers.

He rode out after breakfast; to attend some county meeting, it was said; and re-

turned at four o'clock. I remained in my own room until dinner-time ; but I had to go down then.

He appeared inclined to be thoroughly sociable ; talked and laughed ; and told me of a ludicrous scene which had occurred at the meeting ; but I was cold and reserved, scarcely answering him. He regarded me keenly, as if debating with himself what it could be that had so changed my manner. When the servants had withdrawn, I quitted my place at table, and sat down in a low chair near the fire.

“ Why do you go there ? ” said Mr. Chandos.

“ You will take some dessert ? ”

“ Not this evening.”

“ But why ? ”

“ My head aches.”

He quitted the table, came up, and stood before me. “ Anne, what is the matter with you ? ”

My breath was coming quickly, my swelling heart seemed as if it must burst. All the past rose up forcibly before me ; he, a married man, had mocked me with his love ; had— oh, worse

than all!—gained mine. It was a crying insult; and it was wringing bitterly every sense of feeling I possessed. Anything else I could have borne. Mrs. Penn had hinted at some great crime; words of his own had confirmed it. Had he committed every crime known to man, I could better have forgiven it. But for this deliberate deceit upon me, there could be no forgiveness: and there could be no cure, no comfort for my lacerated heart.

“Are you angry with me for any cause? Have I offended you?”

The question unnerved me worse than I was already unnerved. It did more, it raised all the ire of my spirit. A choice between two evils only seemed to be left to me; either to burst into hysterical tears, or to openly reproach Mr. Chandos. The latter course came first.

“Why did you deceive me, Mr. Chandos?”

“Deceive you!”

“Yes, deceive me, and wretchedly deceive me,” I answered in my desperation; neither caring nor quite knowing what it was I said. “How

came you to speak to me at all of love, knowing *why* it is that you cannot marry?"

He bit his lip as he looked at me. "Do *you* know why it is?"

"I do now. I did not yesterday, as you may be very sure?"

"It is impossible you can know it," he rejoined, in some agitation.

"Mr. Chandos, I *do*. Spare me from saying more. It is not a subject on which either you or I should enlarge."

"And pray, Anne, who was it that enlightened you?"

"*That* is of no consequence," I passionately answered, aroused more and more by the cool manner of his taking the reproach. "I know now what the barrier is you have more than once hinted at, and that is quite enough."

"You consider that barrier an insuperable one—that I ought not to have avowed my love?"

I burst into hysterical tears. It was the last insult: and the last feather, you know, breaks the camel's back. Alas! we were at cross-purposes.

“Forgive me, Anne,” he sadly cried. “Before I remembered that there might be danger in your companionship ; before I was aware that love could ever dawn for me, it had come, and was filling every crevice of my heart. It is stirring within me now as I speak to you. My pulses are thrilling with the bliss of your presence ; my whole being tells of the gladness of heaven.”

In spite of the cruel wrong ; in spite of my own bitter misery ; in spite of the ties to which he was bound, to hear the avowal of this deep tenderness, stirred with a rapture akin to his every fibre of my rebellious love. I know how terribly wrong it must seem : I know how worse than wrong is the confession of it ; but *so it was*. I was but human.

“I am aware that I have acted unwisely,” he pursued, his tone very subdued and repentant. “Still—you must not blame me too greatly. Circumstances are at least as much in fault. We were thrown together, unavoidably ; I could not, for reasons, absent myself from home ; you were located in it. Of course I ought to have remem-

bered that I was not free to love : but then, you see, the danger did not occur to my mind. If it had, I should have been cold as an icicle."

To hear him defend himself seemed worse than all. I had thought, if there lived one man on the face of the earth who was the soul of nobility, uprightness, honour, it was Harry Chandos.

"It was the cruelest insult to me possible to be offered, Mr. Chandos."

"What was?"

"What was! The telling me of your love."

"Anne, I told it you because—forgive my boldness!—I saw that you loved me."

Heaven help me! Yes, it was so; I did love him. My face grew burning hot; I beat my foot upon the carpet.

"I did the best that could be done: at least I strove to do it. It was my intention to lay before you the unhappy case without disguise, its whole facts and deterrent circumstances, and then to say—'Now marry me or reject me?'"

"How can you so speak to me, sir? Marry me! with—with—that barrier?"

"But that barrier may be removed."

Oh ! I saw now, or fancied I saw, the far-off thought he was driving at. Staying seemed to make matters worse ; and I got up from my seat to leave him.

“ Your turning out to be who you are of course made the difficulty greater. I said so last night——”

“ No, it does not,” I interrupted, with an impassioned sob, partly of love, partly of anger. “ Whether I am regarded as a poor strange governess, or the daughter of Colonel Hereford, there could never, never be any excuse for you.”

“ Is that your final, calm opinion ?” he asked, standing before me to ask the question.

“ It is, Mr. Chandos. It will never change. You ought to despise me if it could.”

“ Forgive, forgive me, Miss Hereford ! Nothing remains for me now but to ask it.”

I could not forgive him ; but I was spared saying it, for Hill opened the parlour-door in haste.

“ Mr. Harry, will you please go up to the west wing ? At once, sir.”



"Any change, Hill?"

"No, sir, it's not that. A little trouble."

"Oh: Mrs. Chandos is there, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

*Need* he have asked that question, have mentioned her name in my presence? It struck me that it was a gratuitous insult. Mr. Chandos followed Hill from the room, and as soon as I thought he was safe within the west wing, I flew up to my own chamber.

Flew up with a breaking heart: a heart that felt its need of solitude, of being where it could indulge its own grief unseen, unmolested. I was not, however, to gain my chamber; for, at the entrance to the east wing stood Mrs. Penn, and she arrested me.

"Come into my sitting-room," she said. "Mrs. Chandos will not be back for an hour. She is paying a visit to the west wing."

"Mr. Chandos also," I replied, as indifferently as I could well speak.

"Mr. Chandos also," she assented, having paused to look in my face before speaking. "They

meet there more frequently than the house suspects."

"But why may they not meet? Why is it that they live estranged—or appear to do so?"

"Sit you down," she said, drawing me along the passage and into a small sitting-room, "Here is a warm seat by the fire. There is estrangement between Mr. and Mrs. Chandos, but how far it precisely extends I cannot tell you."

"I did not ask you how far the estrangement extended; I asked you its cause."

"Be content with knowing what you do know, Miss Hereford, without inquiring into causes. The advice is offered you in kindness. I can tell you one thing, that never was more impassioned love given to woman than he at one time felt for Mrs. Chandos."

Ashamed I am to confess that the words caused my heart to chill and my face to burn. I turned the latter where it could not be seen. Mrs. Penn continued.

"He says he loves you, but, compared with the passion he once bore for Mrs. Chandos, his love for you is as *nothing*. Contrast the pale

cold beams of the moon with the burning rays of the tropical sun, and you have a type of that passion, and of this one."

"Why do you say this to me? Is it well?"

"I deem it well. I say it because I think it right that you should know it: were you my own child I should say more. You have one course only before you, my dear; a plain and simple one."

"What is it?"

"To quit Chandos."

"I shall not do that."

"Not do it?"

"No."

"Miss Hereford, you *must*. There lives not a more attractive man than Harry Chandos: and you are already three parts in his toils."

"In his toils? I do not understand you, Mrs. Penn."

"My dear, I only alluded to toils of the heart. I don't suppose he would so far forget himself as to attempt positive ones."

I would not answer her: I felt too indignant,

and sat holding my throbbing temples. How dared she so speak to me?

"Your own good sense ought to show you the necessity of leaving him. By this time to-morrow evening you must have put miles between yourself and Chandos," she eagerly continued, as though she had a personal interest in my going. Hot, angry, flushed, I resented both the words and the advice.

"Mrs. Penn, you are making too much of this. I think you have taken a wrong view of things. My heart is all right, thank you."

"Is it!" she retorted. "You cannot stay on here, his companion. You *cannot*, Anne Hereford."

"I will! Whether with him as a companion or without him is not of any moment—he will not eat me. But I do not quit Chandos until my legitimate plans call me away."

In point of fact I had nowhere to go to; but I did not say that. All this, and her assumption of reading my love, drove me into a perfect fit of anger.

Mrs. Penn paused, seemingly in deliberation,

and when she next spoke it was in a whisper.

“Has he given you any hint of what the dark cloud is that hangs over Chandos? Of the—the crime that was committed?”

“No.”

“It was a very fearful crime: the greatest social crime forbidden in the Decalogue. When the police rode up here the other night I thought they had come for him. I know Mr. Chandos thought it.”

“For whom?”

“For Mrs. Chandos’s husband,” she answered, in a sharp, irascible tone. “Why do you make me repeat it?”

At least I thought she need not repeat the word “husband” in my ears.

“It was murder,” she continued, “if you wish to hear the plain English of it.”

“Was there a trial?”

“No. That has to come. Certain”—she seemed to hesitate—“proofs are being waited for. Poor Mrs. Chandos has not been quite right since: when the moon is at the change and

full they think her worse ; but at all times it is well that she should be under surveillance. That is why I am here."

I did not speak ; I was thinking. No doubt it was all true.

"Poor thing ! the blow was enough to turn her brain," observed Mrs. Penn, musingly. "But I fancy she could never have been of strong intellect. A light, frivolous, butterfly girl, her only recommendation her beauty and soft manner."

"What you told me before was, that she had used Mr. Chandos ill."

"And so she did ; very. But that was altogether a different matter, quite unconnected with what followed."

"How did you become acquainted with these things, Mrs. Penn?"

"In a perfectly legitimate manner. Believe me, Anne, this house is no proper home for you ; Harry Chandos is an unfit companion. Quit both to-morrow."

The pertinacity vexed me nearly beyond bearing. "I'll think of it," I said, sharply ; and

getting up quickly made my escape from the room and the east wing.

Not any too soon. To go to the east wing was against the law, and as I turned into my own room, Mrs. Chandos was coming down the gallery, Mr. Chandos by her side.

“When will you get it for me, Harry?” she was saying as they passed my door.

“Shortly, I hope. The booksellers here may have to send to London for it, but I’ll see that you have it as soon as possible.”

He held open the door of the east wing for her to enter, and then took his way down stairs. I followed presently. Tea would be waiting and I expected to preside at it. How could I absent myself from the routine of the house and the oak-parlour—I, who was but there on sufferance, an interloper? Were the circumstances that had passed such as that I—a lady born, and reared to goodness and modesty and all right instincts—ought to make a commotion over? No. And I felt as if I could bite my tongue to pieces for having said what I did to Mr. Chandos just now. Henceforth, I would hold on my course

in calm self-respect ; meeting him civilly, forgetting, and believing that he forgot anything undesirable that had passed. As to the "crime" spoken of by Mrs. Penn—well, I thought it *could not be*: crime of any sort seemed so entirely incompatible with Mr. Chandos.

And my love? Oh, don't make me speak of it. I could only resolve to beat it down, down, whenever it rose in my heart. Others had suffered, so must I.

He did not appear at tea. I drank mine with what relish I might, and Joseph came for the things. Ah, what passion is like unto love! None can control it. I had resolved to put it away from me, and that whole evening it was uppermost! Fifty times I caught myself yearning for his presence, and saying to myself unbidden that life was a blank without him. Very shortly after taking away the tea-tray, Joseph came in again.

"I am going to close the shutters, miss."

"Very well. Who ordered it to be done?"

"The master."

"The master" meant Mr. Chandos. As



Joseph put aside the white curtains to get to the shutters, I looked out. Pacing the lawn in the moonlight, with his arms folded and his head bent, was Mr. Chandos; pacing it as one in pain. And yet he had thought of me in the midst of it; of my possible timidity, and desired that the shutters should be closed.

It was nearly ten o'clock when he came into the parlour for some papers. I concluded he was going to his own sitting-room.

"Good night!" he said, holding out his hand as usual.

Should I take it? A momentary debate with myself, and then I shook hands coldly with him. Had I not decided to let the past be as though it had never been? And all the display of resentment possible would not convert bad into good.

Days went on: days of an unsatisfactory life. The physician, Dr. Laken, came over, and stayed two of them. Of Mr. Chandos I saw but little: he was out and about, and more than usual in the west wing. I seemed estranged from everybody. Mrs. Penn I shunned; Mr. Chandos was

just courteous to me, nothing more ; and I had never been intimate with any one else in the house.

And now I resolved to leave. It would not look *now* as though I hurried away in passion, or because I feared my own love. Heaven knows I wished to do right, whatever it cost me ; and reason pointed out that to remain longer was not only inexpedient but might be looked upon as such. The life for me was beginning to be intolerable. He was with me at times, the very fact of his presence feeding the love that held possession of me ; and the image of Mrs. Chandos upstairs began to haunt me as a spectre. It was not possible longer to deceive myself with fine resolutions ; my eyes were opened to the fact that I could not begin to forget him or to love him less so long as I stayed at Chandos.

I wrote to Madame de Mellissie, telling her that I felt obliged to cancel my engagement with her, and should quit Chandos. Then I wrote to the Misses Barlieu, asking them to receive me while I looked out for another situa-

tion, and begging them not to refuse me on the score of the fever: I was not afraid of it, I said, I need not go near the infirmary. But I truly hoped and expected it had by that time passed.

It was a fine afternoon, and a fancy came over me to take the letters to the village post-office instead of leaving them on the hall-table, so I put my things on. In going out at the portico I met Mrs. Penn.

“Do you know that you are looking ill—that this struggle is telling upon you?” she abruptly exclaimed, but in a tone full of kindness. “Why don’t you make an effort, and quit it?”

“The effort is made,” I answered, half in anger, half in despair, as I held to her view the letters in my hand. “Here is the announcement to those who will, I hope, receive me. I must wait for an answer, and then I bid adieu to Chandos.”

“My dear, you have done well,” she answered, as she passed into the house, and I out of the portico.

Leaning against the wall, on the far side, was

Mr. Chandos, who must have heard what had been said. That she was unconscious of his vicinity, I was certain, and, for myself, I started when I saw him. He said something, but I made as if I did not hear, and went quickly on.

The post-office was farther than I thought. I picked some ferns and blackberries; and I lingered on my road in miserable musing. By the time I turned to go home again, it had grown dusk. There was a lane near to Chandos, which led to a small entrance-gate at an obscure part of the grounds: the laurel-gate it was called, because many laurels grew near it. By taking this way I should cut off a good portion of the road, and down the lane I turned. Very much to my surprise, I came by-and-by to a cottage. A cottage I had never seen before; and was very sorry to see it now, for it showed me that I had turned down the wrong lane.

It was the waste of time that vexed me; but all I could do was to retrace my steps and take the right lane. It was nearly dark night when I at length got to the laurel-gate; some of the stars were shining.

The gate was unlatched, as if the last person who passed through had omitted to close it. A narrow path led to other narrow paths, which branched off through the trees ; I hesitated which to take, not being certain which would lead me soonest to the house ; and as I stood thinking, a dark form came following me down the lane. It was Mr. Edwin Barley's.

The dark night, the superstition attaching to the place, the proximity of the man I so dreaded, brought enough of terror. He might be coming to seize me and claim me then ! The fear lent me wings. Flying up a path at hazard, I never ceased the speed until I was in the broad walk, and close—it was rather curious that it should be so—to Mr. Chandos. He was coming in from an errand to the lodge.

With a sense of protection that was as a very balm to my spirit, I rested my hand on his arm. All considerations were merged in the moment's terror. I forgot his great offence ; I forgot my own self-esteem : standing there, he appeared to me only as a great and powerful protector, one in whom I might find safety and shelter.

“Oh, Mr. Chandos! In mercy take care of me!”

Once more, as if nothing wrong had stepped between us, he held me against his side. He must have felt the throbs of my beating heart.

“What has alarmed you?” he asked in a tone a great deal too full of tenderness.

My only answer was to draw back amid the side trees, that I might be hidden from Edwin Barley. Mr. Chandos came and stood there also.

“What is it, Anne? The ghost? Or Edwin Barley again?”

My senses were in a degree returning to me, and I told him what had occurred; turning my head to listen still.

“He will not follow you here. As to the lane, usage has made it public property, and he has a right to walk in it if he chooses.”

I turned to the house. He quietly put my arm within his. “Suffer it to be so for an instant, Anne; you are trembling still.”

And so we went on thus.

“What was it I heard you say to Mrs. Penn about quitting Chandos?”

“ I think the time has come for me to quit it. of the Misses Barlieu can receive me, I shall go to them. I have written to ask.”

“ That’s the letter you have been so far to post! Were you afraid I should intercept it?—as mine was intercepted!”

“ Not that. I thought the walk would be pleasant.”

“ Rather too late a one, nevertheless!”

I did not tell him I had wasted my time in it, picking ferns, eating blackberries, thinking, and finally losing my way. “ What’s this?” said Mr. Chandos.

He alluded to the handful of ferns I carried, and without ceremony took one of the best sprays and put it in his coat “ as a keepsake.”

“ If you are to leave, Anne, I must have something to remind me of you—you know!”

There was a light sound in his voice, which seemed to say he treated the notion of my leaving as a jest; as if he knew I should not go.

“ I *shall* leave, Mr. Chandos!”

“ Not just yet, at any rate. Madame de

Mellissie left you with us, and to her only can we resign you !”

“ I have written to Madame de Mellissie also, telling her I now take my plans upon myself.”

“ Oh, been posting that letter also, I suppose ! Go you must not, Anne ; I cannot part with you.”

Every right feeling within me rose in rebellion against the avowal, and I strove to withdraw my arm, but my strength was as nothing in his firm grasp.

“ I cannot part with you, I say ; it would be like parting with life. These last few days—when we have been living in estrangement—have sufficed to show me what it would be were you to be away entirely. And so——”

“ But you know you ought not to say this to me, Mr. Chandos !” I interrupted, speaking passionately and through my blinding tears. “ It is unworthy of you. What have I done that you should so insult me ?”

“ Listen to me for a minute, Anne. I have been weighing things calmly and dispassionately ; it has been my employment since the night of



the explanation, when you told me you had become cognizant of preventing circumstances. I have endeavoured to judge unselfishly, as though the interest lay with another—not with myself; and I confess I cannot see any good reason why you should not become my wife. I mean, of course, later; when difficulties that exist now shall be removed from my path.”

It was strangely unaccountable to hear him speak in this manner. I had always deemed him to be of a most honourable nature, one to whom the bare allusion of anything not good and perfect and upright, would be distasteful. Before I knew of existing circumstances, it had been bad enough to speak to me of love; but now——

Whether he had taken my silence for acquiescence I know not; I suppose there can be no doubt of it; but he suddenly bent his head and left some kisses on my face. Was he insane, or only a bad man?

“I *could* not help it,” he hastily murmured in agitation. “I know it is wrong and foolish, but a man has not always his actions under cold

control. Forgive me, Anne! Stay here to gladden me: and hope, with me, that things will work round. I should not bid you do so without good reason."

A variety of emotions nearly choked me. His words told upon me worse than his kisses. How could things work round so that he might be free, save by one event, the death of his wife?—and she was young and healthy! How dared he during this, her life, urge me to remain there to gladden him? But for the strongest control, I should have burst into hysterical tears, born of indignation and of excitement; and little recked I what I said in my passion, as I wrenched my arm away from him.

"Things work round, Mr. Chandos! Are your thoughts glancing to a second murder?"

I borrowed the word from Mrs. Penn's mysterious communication—which I had not believed. It was very bad of me to say it; I know that; but when in a passion of confusion one does not wait to choose words.

"Anne, you might have spared me that reproach," he rejoined, in a subdued tone of pain.

"How have you spared me?"

"It may end brightly yet; it may indeed. What's that?"

A rustling amidst the dense shrubs on the right caused the question. Possibly with an idea that it might be Edwin Barley, Mr. Chandos quitted me to look. I darted across the road, and plunged amidst the trees, intending to get on by a bye-path, and so escape him. Suddenly I came upon Lizzy Dene, talking to a man. She started back, with a faint cry.

"I am going right for the house, am I not, Lizzy?"

"Quite so, miss. Take the path on the right when you come to the weeping elm-tree."

I had nearly gained the tree, when Lizzy Dene came up with me. The woman seemed to be in agitation as great as mine.

"Miss," she began, "will you do me a favour, and not mention who you saw me talking to?"

"I should be clever to mention it, Lizzy. I don't know him."

"But, please miss, not to say you saw me talking to any one. The young man is not a

sweetheart, I do assure you; he is a relation; but those servants are dreadful scandal-mongers."

"You need not fear; it is no affair of mine. And I am not in the habit of telling tales to servants."

She continued to walk a little behind me. It seemed I was to have nothing but encounters. There, on a garden-chair, as we turned on to the lawn, sat Mrs. Penn.

"I am sitting here to recover breath," she said, in answer to my word of exclamation. "It has been taken away by surprise. I don't quite know whether I am awake or dreaming."

"Have you seen the ghost, ma'am?" asked Lizzy, breathlessly, putting her own comment on the words.

"Well, I don't know; I should just as soon have expected to see one as Lady Chandos. She was in the pine-walk."

"Impossible, Mrs. Penn," I exclaimed.

"Impossible or possible, Miss Hereford, Lady Chandos it was," she answered, in a resolute tone. "I can tell you I rubbed my eyes when I caught sight of her, believing they must see

things that were not. She wore a black silk cloak and had a black hood over her head. It was certainly Lady Chandos; she seemed to be walking to take the air."

To hear that any lady, bed-ridden, as may be said, was suddenly walking abroad in a damp, dark night to take the air, was nearly unbelievable. It was quite so to Lizzy Dene. Her eyes grew round with wonder as they were turned on Mrs. Penn.

"Then I say with miss here that it's just impossible. My lady's no more capable of walking out, ma'am, than——"

"I tell you I saw her," conclusively interrupted Mrs. Penn. "It was twenty minutes ago, at the turn from dusk to dark. I came and sat down here, waiting for her to pass me: which she has not done. But I suppose there are other paths by which she could gain the house. Lizzy, how obstinate you look over it!"

"And enough to make me, ma'am; when I know that my lady it *could not* be."

"Do you see much of her?" asked Mrs. Penn.

"Me! Neither me nor nobody else, ma'am.

If ever Hill calls me to help with a room in the west wing, my lady has first been moved out of it. Since her illness, Hill does the work there herself. No, no ; it never was my lady. Unless—unless—oh, goodness, grant it may not be!—unless she's dead !”

“ Why, what does the girl mean ?” cried Mrs. Penn, tartly.

Lizzy Dene had suddenly flown into one of her rather frequent phases of superstition, and began to explain with a shivering sob.

“ It is just this,” she whispered, glancing timidly over her shoulder. “ Hill was in some distress at mid-day ; we servants asked her what was the matter, and she said my lady was worse ; as ill as she could be. Now, it is well known, in the moment of death people have appeared to others at a distance. I think my lady must have died, and it was her spirit that Mrs. Penn has just seen in the pine-walk. Oh ! ah ! oh !”

Lizzy Dene wound up with three shrieks. In some curiosity—to say the least of it—we crossed the lawn. It *was* curious that Lady Chandos, if worse, should be abroad. Hickens was at the

hall-door, looking out probably for me. It was past dinner-time.

"How is Lady Chandos?" I impulsively asked.

"I have not thought to inquire this evening, miss. I suppose, much as usual."

"Isn't she dead?" put in Lizzy.

"Dead!" he echoed, staring at the girl. "Anyway there's a basin of arrowroot just gone up for her, and I never heard that dead people could eat. What crotchet have you got in your head now, Lizzy Dene?"

I think we all looked a little foolish. Mrs. Penn laughed as she ran in; Lizzy Dene went round to the servants' entrance.

"Hickens," I said, in a low tone, passing him to go upstairs, "I have the headache, and shall not take any dinner. Perhaps Harriet will kindly light a bit of fire in my room, and bring me up some tea."

For I had caught a glimpse of Mr. Chandos and the dinner, both waiting for me in the oak-parlour.

## CHAPTER V.

### GETTING INTO THE WEST WING.

SITTING by the fire in the pretty bedroom with the candles on the table, and the chintz curtains drawn before the window, shutting out the pine-walk and any unearthly sight that might be in it, I thought and resolved. To remain at Chandos with its ostensible master in his present mood was excessively undesirable, almost an impossibility; and I began to think I might quit it without waiting for an answer from Miss Barlieu. The chief difficulty would be the getting away; the actual departure; for Mr. Chandos was certain to oppose it. Another difficulty was money.

It struck me that the only feasible plan would be to see Lady Chandos. I would tell her that I *must* go, not mentioning why; ask her to sanction it, and to lend me enough money to



take me to Nulle. I did not see that I could leave without seeing her; certainly not without making her acquainted with the proposed fact, and thanking her for her hospitality and kindness. Heroines of romance, read of in fiction, might take abrupt flight from dwellings by night, or else; but I was nothing of the sort; only a rational girl of sober, every-day life, and must act accordingly.

“Do you happen to know how Lady Chandos is to-night, Harriet?” I asked, when the maid came in to inquire whether I wanted anything more.

“Her ladyship’s a trifle better, miss. I have just heard Hill say so.”

Harriet left the room; and I sat thinking as before. That my seeing Lady Chandos could only be accomplished by stratagem I knew, for Hill was as a very dragon, guarding that west wing. If it was really Lady Chandos who had been pacing the grounds—and Mrs. Penn was positive in her assertion and belief—she must undoubtedly be well enough to speak to me. It was but a few words I had to say to her; a few

minutes' time that I should detain her. "Circumstances have called me away, but I could not leave without personally acquainting you, madam, and thanking you for your hospitality and kindness." Something to that effect: and then I would borrow the money—about forty or fifty francs; which Miss Barlieu would give me to remit, as soon as I got to Nulle. With Lady Chandos's sanction to my departure, Mr. Chandos could not put forth any plea to detain me.

Never were plans better laid than mine—as I thought. Rehearsing them over and over again in my mind after I lay down in bed, the usual sleeplessness followed. I tossed and turned from side to side; I began to repeat verses; all in vain. Sleep had gone away from me, and I heard the clock strike two.

I heard something else: a stir in the gallery. It seemed as if some one burst out at the doors of the west wing, and came swiftly to the chamber of Mr. Chandos. In the stillness of night, sounds are plainly distinct that would be inaudible in the day. The footsteps were like Hill's, as if she had only stockings on. There was a brief whis-

pering in Mr. Chandos's chamber, and the same footsteps ran back to the west wing.

What could be the matter? Was Lady Chandos worse? Almost as I asked myself the question, I heard Mr. Chandos come out of his room, go downstairs, and out at the hall-door. Curiosity led me to look from the window. The stars were shining brilliantly; I suppose it was a frost; and the tops of the dark pine-trees rose clear and defined against the sky. All was quiet.

A very few minutes and other sounds broke the silence: those of a horse's footsteps. Mr. Chandos—as I supposed it to be—came riding forth at a canter from the direction of the stables: the pace increasing to a gallop as he turned into the broad walk.

There seemed less sleep for me than ever. In about an hour's time I heard Mr. Chandos ride in again. I heard him ride round to the stables, and come back thence on foot. He let himself in at the hall door, came softly upstairs, and went into the west wing. It was in that wing that something must be amiss.

I was three-parts dressed in the morning when

Mrs. Penn knocked at my door and entered. I did wish she would not thus interrupt me! Once she had come when I was reading my chapter; once during my prayers.

“Did you hear any disturbance in the night?” she began. “Mr. Chandos went out at two o’clock. Do you know what for?”

“Mrs. Penn! How should I be likely to know?”

“I happened to be up, looking from the end window——”

“At that time of night?” I interrupted.

“Yes, at that time of night,” she repeated. “I was watching for—for—the ghost if you will” (but I thought somehow she said the ghost to mystify me) “and so I may as well confess it. I often do watch from my window at night. Quite on a sudden a figure appeared making its way swiftly towards the stables; my heart stood still for a moment; I thought the ghost had come at last. I did, Anne Hereford: and you need not gaze at me with your searching eyes, as if you questioned my veracity. But soon I recognised Mr. Chandos, and presently saw him

come back on horseback. Where did he go? For what purpose?"

"You put the questions as though you thought I could answer them," I said to her; and so she did, speaking in a demanding sort of way. "I cannot tell where Mr. Chandos has gone."

"He is back now: he was home again in about an hour. I would give the whole world to know!"

"But why? What business is it of yours or mine? Mr. Chandos's movements are nothing to us."

"They are so much to us—to me—that I would forfeit this to be able to follow him about and see where he goes and what he does," she said, holding up her right hand.

I looked at her in wonder.

"I would. Is it not a singular sort of thing that a gentleman should rise from his bed at two o'clock in the morning, saddle his horse by stealth, and ride forth on a mysterious journey?"

"It is singular. But he may not have saddled his horse by stealth."

"How now?" she tartly answered. "He did saddle it; saddled it himself."

"Yes: but that may have been only from a wish not to disturb the grooms from their rest. To do a thing oneself with a view of sparing others, and to do it stealthily are two things."

"So your spirit must rise up to defend him still! Take care of yourself, Anne Hereford!"

"Nay, there was no *defence*. What does it signify whether Mr. Chandos saddles a horse for himself or gets a man to saddle it?"

"Not much, perhaps; looking at it in the light you do."

"Mrs. Penn, I wish you would please to go, and let me finish dressing. I am afraid of being late."

Rather to my surprise, she moved to the door without another word, and shut it behind her.

I went down to breakfast: I could not help myself. It would not do to plead illness or the sulks, and ask to have my meals sent upstairs. But we had a third at table, I found; and that was Dr. Laken. I am not sure how I and Mr.

Chandos should have got on without him ; with him all went smoothly.

But not merrily. For both he and Mr. Chandos spoke and looked as if under the influence of some great care. Listening to their conversation, I discovered a rather singular circumstance. Mr. Chandos's errand in the night had been to the telegraph office at Warsall, to send an imperative message for Dr. Laken. That gentleman (almost as though a prevision had been upon him that he would be wanted) had started for Chandos the previous evening by a night train, and was at Chandos at seven in the morning. So that he and the message crossed each other. His visit was of course—though I was not told it—to Lady Chandos ; and I feared there must be some dangerous change in her. They talked together, without reference to me.

“I wish you could have remained,” Mr. Chandos suddenly said to the doctor.

“I wish I could. I have told you why I am obliged to go, and where. I'll be back to-night, if I can ; if not, early to-morrow. Remember one thing, Mr. Harry—that my staying here

could be of no possible benefit. It is a satisfaction to you, of course, that I should be at hand, but I can do nothing."

"Mr. Dexter is here, sir, and wishes to see you," said Hickens, entering the parlour at this juncture. "He says he is sorry to disturb you so early, sir, but he is off to that sale of stock, and must speak to you first. I have shown him into your private room, sir."

Mr. Chandos rose from his seat and went out. And now came my turn. I was alone with Dr. Laken, and seized on the opportunity to inquire about Lady Chandos. See her I must, and would.

"Is Lady Chandos alarmingly ill, Dr. Laken?"

He was eating an egg at the time, and he did not speak immediately: his attention seemed almost equally divided between regarding me and finishing the egg.

"What you young ladies might call alarmingly ill, we old doctors might not," were his words, when he at length spoke.

"Can she speak?"

"Oh yes."



“And is sufficiently well to understand, if any one speaks to her?”

“Quite so. Don’t trouble yourself, my dear, about Lady Chandos. I trust she will be all right with time.”

Not another word did I get from him. He began talking of the weather; and then took up a newspaper until Mr. Chandos came back. As I was leaving them alone after breakfast, Mr. Chandos spoke to me in a half grave, half jesting tone.

“You are one of the family, you know, Miss Hereford, and may be asked to keep its affairs close, just as Emily would be were she here. Don’t mention that I went to Warsall in the night—as you have now heard I did go. It is of no use to make the household uneasy.”

And, as if to enforce the words, Dr. Laken gave three or four emphatic nods. I bowed and withdrew.

To see Lady Chandos? How was it to be done? And, in spite of Dr. Laken’s reassuring answer, I scarcely knew what to believe. Hill went about with a solemn face, silent as the

grave; and an impression pervaded the household that something was very much amiss in the west wing. *My* impression was, that there was a great deal of unaccountable mystery somewhere.

“Harriet,” I said, as the girl came to my room in the course of her duties, “how *is* Lady Chandos?”

“Well, miss, we can’t quite make out,” was the answer. “Hill is in dreadful trouble, and the doctor is here again; but Lizzy Dean saw my lady for a minute this morning, and she looked much as usual.”

So far well. To Lady Chandos I determined to penetrate ere the day should close. And I am sure, had anybody seen me that morning, dodging into the gallery from my room and back again, they would have deemed me haunted by a restless spirit. I was watching for my opportunity. It did not come for nearly all day. In the morning Dr. Laken and Mr. Chandos were there; in the afternoon Hill was shut up in it. It was getting dusk when I, still on the watch, saw Hill come forth. She left the door ajar, as

if she intended to return instantly, and whisked into a large linen-closet close by. Now was my time. I glided past the closet, quiet as a mouse, and inside the green baize door of the west wing.

But which was the room of Lady Chandos? No time was to be lost, for if Hill returned, she was sure to eject me summarily, as she had done once before. I softly opened two doors, taking no notice of what the rooms might contain, looking only whether Lady Chandos was inside. Next I came to one, and opened it, as I had the others; and saw—what? Who—who was it sitting there? Not Lady Chandos.

In a large arm-chair at the fire, propped up with pillows, sat an emaciated object, white, thin, cadaverous. A tall man evidently, bearing in features a great resemblance to Mr. Chandos, a strange likeness to that ghostly vision—if it had been one—I had once seen in the gallery. Was he the ghost?—sitting there and staring at me with his large eyes, but never speaking? If not a ghost, it must be a living skeleton.

My pulses stood still; my heart leaped into

my mouth. The figure raised his arm, and pointed peremptorily to the door with his long, lanky, white fingers. A sign that I must quit his presence.

I was glad to do so. Startled, terrified, bewildered, I thought no more of Lady Chandos, but went back through the passage, and out at the green baize door. There, face to face, I encountered Mr. Chandos.

I shall not readily forget *his* face when he looked at me. Never had greater hauteur, rarely greater anger, appeared in the countenance of any living man.

“Have you been in *there*?” he demanded.

“Yes. I——” More I could not say. The words stuck in my throat.

“Listen, Miss Hereford,” he said, his lips working with emotion. “I am grieved to be compelled to say anything discourteous to a lady, more especially to you, but I must *forbid* you to approach these rooms, however powerfully your curiosity may urge you to visit them. I act as the master of Chandos, and demand it as a right. Your business lies at the other end of the gallery ;

this end is sacred, and must be kept so from intrusion."

I stole away with my crimsoned face, with a crimsoned brain, I think, wishing the gallery floor would open and admit me. Hill came out of the closet with wondering eyes; Mr. Chandos went on, and shut the door of the west wing after him. I felt ashamed to sickness. My "curiosity!"

But who could it be, he whom I had just seen, thus closeted in the apartments of Lady Chandos? Could it be Sir Thomas, arrived from abroad? But when did he arrive? and why this concealment in his mother's rooms?—for concealment it appeared to be. Whoever it was, he was fearfully ill and wasted: of that there could be no doubt; ill, as it seemed to me, almost unto death; and a conviction came over me that Dr. Laken's visits were paid to him, not to Lady Chandos.

"My dear child, how flushed and strange you look!"

The speaker was Mrs. Penn, interrupting my chain of thought. She was standing at the door

of the east wing, came forward, and turned with me into my room.

“Anne,” she continued, her tone full of kind, gentle compassion, “was Mr. Chandos speaking in that manner to *you*?”

“I deserved it,” I sighed, “for I really had no right to enter the west wing clandestinely. I went there in search of Lady Chandos. I want to leave, but I cannot go without first seeking her, and I thought I would try to do so, in spite of Hill.”

“And did you see her?” questioned Mrs. Penn.

“No; I could not see her anywhere; I suppose I did not go into all the rooms. But I saw some one else.”

“Who was it?”

“The strangest being,” I answered, too absorbed in the subject, too surprised and bewildered, to observe my usual custom of telling nothing to Mrs. Penn. “He was sitting in an easy-chair, supported by pillows; a tall, emaciated man, looking—oh, so ill! His face was the thinnest and whitest I ever saw; but it had a likeness to Mr. Chandos.”

Had I been more collected, I might have seen how the revelation affected Mrs. Penn. Just then my eyes and senses were, so to say, blinded. She put her hand on my arm, listening for more.

“He startled me terribly; I declare, at first sight, I did think it was a ghost. Why should he be hidden there?—if he is hidden. Unless it is Sir Thomas Chandos come home from India——Mrs. Penn! what’s the matter?”

The expression of her countenance at length arrested me. Her face had turned white, her lips were working with excitement.

“For the love of Heaven, wait!” she uttered. “A tall man, bearing a family likeness to Mr. Chandos—was that what you said?”

“A striking likeness: allowing for the fact that Mr. Chandos is in health, and that the other looks as though he were dying. The eyes are not alike: his are large and dark, Mr. Chandos’s blue. Why? Perhaps it is Sir Thomas Chandos.”

“It is not Sir Thomas; he is a short, plain man, resembling his mother. No, no; I know

too well who it is ; and it explains the mystery of that west wing. All that has been so unaccountable to me since I have dwelt at Chandos is plain now. Dolt that I was, never to have suspected it ! Oh ! but they were clever dissemblers, with their sicknesses of my Lady Chandos !”

She went out, and darted into the east wing. So astonished was I, that I stood looking after her, and saw her come quietly forth again after a minute or two, attired to go out. She was gliding down the stairs, when Mrs. Chandos likewise came from the east wing and called to her.

“ Mrs. Penn, where are you going ? I want you.”

Mrs. Penn, thus arrested, turned round, a vexed expression on her face.

“ I wish to do a very slight errand for myself, madam. I shall not be long.”

“ I cannot spare you now ; I cannot, indeed. You must defer it until to-morrow. I will not stay by myself now it is getting dusk. I am as nervous as I can be this evening. You are not



half so attentive as Mrs. Freeman was : you are always away, or wanting to be."

Mrs. Penn came slowly up the stairs again, untying her bonnet-strings. But I saw she had a great mind to rebel, and depart on her errand in defiance of her mistress.

What could it be that she was so anxious for? what was she going to do? As she had passed to the stairs before being called back, the words "Down now with the Chandoses!" had reached my ears from her lips, softly spoken. I felt sick and frightened. What mischief might I not have caused by my incautious revelation? Oh! it seemed as though *I* had been treacherous to Chandos.

Restless and uncomfortable, I was going into the oak-parlour a little later, when Lizzy Dene, in a smart new bonnet and plaid shawl, a small basket on her arm, came into the hall to say something to Hickens, who was there.

"I suppose I may go out at this door, now I'm here?" said she, afterwards; and Hickens grunted out "Yes" as he withdrew. At that self-same moment Mrs. Penn came softly and

swiftly down the stairs, and called to her. Neither of them saw me, just inside the parlour.

“You are going out, I see, Lizzy. Will you do a little errand for me?”

“If it won’t take long,” was the girl’s free answer. “But I have got leave to go out to tea, and am an hour later than I thought to be.”

“It will not take you a minute out of your way. You know where Mr. Edwin Barley lives—the new tenant. Go to his house with this note, and desire that it may be given to him: should he not be at home, say that it must be handed to him the instant he comes in. If you do this promptly, and keep it to yourself, mind!—I will give you a crown piece!”

“I’ll do it, and say ‘thank ye,’ too, ma’am,” laughed Lizzy, in glee.

She opened the lid of her basket, popped in the note, and went out at the hall door. Mrs. Penn disappeared upstairs.

But Lizzy Dene had halted in the portico, and had her face turned towards the skies.

“Now, is it going to rain?—or is it only the dark of the evening?” she deliberated aloud.

“Better take an umbrella. I should not like my new shawl to be spoilt; and they didn’t warrant the blue in it, if it got a soaking.”

She put down the basket, and ran back to the kitchen. Now was my opportunity. I stole to the basket, lifted the lid, and took out the letter, trusting to good luck, and to Lizzy’s not looking into the basket on her return.

She did not. She came back with the umbrella, snatched up the basket by its two handles, and went down the broad walk, at a run.

With the letter grasped in my hand, I was hastening to my own room to read it in peace—

“Read it!” interposes the reader, aghast at the dishonour. “*Read it?*”

Yes; read it. I believed that that letter was full of treachery to Chandos, and that I had unwittingly contributed to raise it, through my incautious revelation. Surely it was my duty now to do what I could to avert it, even though it involved the opening of Mrs. Penn’s letter. A sudden light of suspicion seemed to have opened upon her—whispering a doubt that *she* was treacherous.

But in the hall I met the dinner coming in, and Mr. Chandos with it. Putting the note inside my dress, I sat down to table.

It was a silent dinner, save for the most ordinary courtesies ; Mr. Chandos was grave, pre-occupied, and sorrowful ; I was as grave and pre-occupied as he. When the servants left, he drew a dish of walnuts towards him, peeled some, and passed them to me ; then he began to peel for himself. It was upon my tongue to say No ; not to accept them from him : but somehow words failed.

“ Anne, I have not understood you these last few days.”

The address took me by surprise, for there had been a long silence. He did not raise his eyes to mine as he spoke, but kept them on the walnuts.

“ Have you not, sir ? ”

“ What could have induced you to intrude into the west wing, to-day ? Pardon the word, if it grates upon your ear ; that part of Chandos House is *private* ; private and sacred ; known to be so by all inmates ; and, for any one to enter unsolicited, *is* an intrusion.”

“I am sorry that I went in—very sorry; no one can repent of it now more than I do; but I had an urgent motive for wishing to see Lady Chandos. I wish to see her still, if possible; I do not like to quit Chandos without it.”

“You are not going to quit Chandos?”

“I leave to-morrow, if it be practicable. If not, the next day.”

“No,” he said; “it must not be. I act for my mother, and refuse her sanction.”

Too vexed to answer, too vexed to remain at table, I rose and went to the fire, standing with my back to him.

“What has changed you?” he abruptly asked.

“Changed me?”

“For some days now you have been unlike yourself. Why visit upon me the sins of another? I suffer sufficiently as it is; I suffer always.”

I could not understand the speech any more than if it had been Greek, and glanced to him for explanation.

“I look back on my past conduct, and cannot

see that I am to blame. We were thrown together by circumstances ; and if love stole unconsciously over us, it was neither my fault nor yours. I was wrong, you will say, to avow this love ; I believe I was ; it might have been better that I had held my tongue. But——”

“ It would be better that you should hold it now, sir. I do not wish to enter upon any explanation. Quit your house, I will. Lady Chandos, were she made acquainted with what has passed, would be the first to send me from it.”

Mr. Chandos rose and stood up by me. “ Am I to understand that you wish to quit it because I have spoken of this love ?”

“ Yes ; and because—because it is no longer a fit residence for me.”

“ Do you wish to imply that under no circumstances—that is, with any barrier that may exist now against my marrying removed—would you accept my love ?”

The hot tears come into my eyes. Scarcely could I keep them from raining down.

“ I wish to imply—to say—that not under

any alteration of circumstances that the world can bring about, would I accept your love, Mr. Chandos. The very fact of your naming it to me is an insult."

Ah, me! and how passionately was I loving him in my heart all the time, even as I spoke it.

"Very well. In that case it may be better that you quit Chandos. Should Miss Barlieu's answer prove favourable—I mean, if she assures you that danger from the fever is past—you shall be conveyed thither under proper escort."

"Thank you," I interrupted, feeling, I do believe, not half as grateful as I ought.

"A moment yet. In case the danger is not past, you must remain here a little longer. There is no help for it. I will promise not to speak another unwelcome word to you, and to give you as little of my company as possible. We will both ignore the past as a pleasant dream, just as though it had not existed. Will this content you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I give you my honour that after this evening it shall be so. But we must have a few

words together first. I have already intimated that I should not have spoken so soon but for perceiving that love had arisen on your side as well as mine. Now don't fly off at a tangent: I intend to have an explanation from you this night: an explanation that shall set things straight between us, or sever us for ever. We are not boy and girl that we should shrink from it. At least, if you are but a girl in years, you have sense and prudence and right feeling that belong rather to double your age."

Standing there before me, calm and resolute, I knew there could be no avoidance of the explanation he sought. His was the master-spirit. But it was cruel to wish me to put it into words. And so entirely needless!

"If I allude to your love for me, it is not needlessly to pain, or, as you may think, insult you: believe me, when I say it; but only to call to your notice the inconsistency of your conduct. It is *this* that I require an explanation of. Child, you *know* you loved me,"—— and his hand slightly trembled as he laid it on my shoulder. "Whence, then, the sudden change?"



"I did not know your position then," I answered, meeting the words as I supposed he wished to force me to meet them, and taking a step backwards on the hearth-rug.

"I cannot but think you must in some way be mistaking my position. Circumstances, very sad and grievous circumstances, are rendering it of brighter prospect. I am aware of the misfortune that attaches to my family, the disgrace that is reflected upon me: but you should not treat me as though the disgrace or the fault were mine. Surely there is no justice in resenting it on me! You might have rejected me with civility."

"I do not know what you are saying," I interrupted, passionately angry. "What is it to me, the disgrace attaching to your family? That could not sway *me*. It is unknown to me."

"Unknown to you?" he repeated in accents of surprise.

"Entirely unknown, save for vague rumours that I have not wished to attend to. The disgrace lies with you, sir, not with your family."

“With me? What have I done? Do you mean in having spoken to you of love?” he added, finding I did not answer. “At least, I do not see that *disgrace* could be charged on me for that. I intended to lay the case openly before you, and it would have been at your option to accept or reject me.”

“Do you call deceit and dishonour no disgrace, Mr. Chandos?”

“Great disgrace. But I have not been guilty of either.”

“You have been guilty of both.”

“When? and how?”

“To me. You know it. You know it, sir. Had my father been alive; had I any friend in the world to protect me, I do not think you would have dared to speak to me of love.”

“Were your father, Colonel Hereford, alive, Anne, I should lay the whole case before him, and say—‘Judge for yourself: shall, or shall not your daughter be mine?’ I fancy he would find the objection less insuperable than you appear to do.”

I believe I simply stared in answer to this.

Calm, good, and noble he looked, standing there with his truthful eyes, speaking his apparently truthful words. It seemed that we must be at cross-purposes.

“When you spoke of the bar that existed to your marrying, you put it upon the hinted-at misfortunes, the disgrace attaching to your family, Mr. Chandos. But you never alluded to the real bar.”

“There is no other bar. But for that, I would like to make you my wife to-morrow. What have you got in your head?”

I knew what I was beginning to have in my temper. “If you continue to detain me here, sir, and to say these things, I will go straight with my complaint to Mrs. Chandos.”

“To Mrs. Chandos! What good would that do?” he coolly questioned.

“Oh, sir, spare me! I did not think you would behave so. Don’t you see, putting me and my feelings out of the question, how all this wrongs *her*?”

He looked at me strangely, his countenance a

puzzle. "What has Mrs. Chandos to do with it? She is nothing to you or to me."

"She is your wife, sir."

His elbow displaced some ornament on the mantelpiece; he had to turn and save it from falling. Then he faced me again.

"My wife, did you say?"

And very much ashamed I had felt to say it: with my hot face and my eyes bent on the carpet.

"Mrs. Chandos is no wife of mine. I never was married yet. Did you go to sleep and dream it?"

Ah, how that poor foolish heart of mine stood still! Was it possible that Mrs. Penn had been mistaken?—that my misery had been without foundation; my supposed offered insults only fancied ones. No condemned criminal, called forth from his cell to hear the reprieve read that will restore to him the life he has forfeited, could experience a more intense revulsion of joy than I did then.

I put my hands up in front of him: it was no moment for affectation or reticence.

“Tell me the truth,” I gasped, “the truth as before heaven? Is, or is not, Mrs. Chandos your wife?”

He bent his head a little forward, speaking clearly and distinctly, with an emphasis on every word.

“Mrs. Chandos is my sister-in-law. She is my brother’s wife. It is the truth, in the presence of heaven.”

I covered my face with my hands to hide the blinding tears that fell on my cheeks of shame. To have made so dreadful a mistake!—and to have spoken of it!

Mr. Chandos took the hands away, holding them and me before him.

“Having said so much, Anne, you must say more. Has this been the cause of your changed conduct? Whence could the strange notion have arisen?”

I spoke a few words as well as I could; just the heads of what I had heard, and from whom.

“Mrs. Penn! Why she of all people must know better. She knows who Mrs. Chandos’s

husband is. Surely she cannot be mistaking me for my brother!"

"I thought, sir, you had no brother, except Sir Thomas."

"Yes, I have another brother," he answered, in a whisper. "You saw him to-day, Anne."

"That poor sick gentleman, who looks so near the grave?"

"Even so. It is he who is the husband of Mrs. Chandos. The fact of his being at Chandos is unknown, not to be spoken of," he said, sinking his voice still lower, and glancing round the walls of the room, as though he feared they might contain eaves-droppers. "Take care that it does not escape your lips."

Alas, it had escaped them. I bent my head and my troubled face, wondering whether I ought to confess it to him. But he spoke again.

"And so—this is the silly dream you have been losing yourself in! Anne! could you not have trusted me better?"

"You must please forgive me," I said, looking piteously at him through my tears.

Forgive me! He suddenly put out his arms, and gathered me to his breast.

“Will you recal your vow, child; never—under any circumstances that the world can bring forth—to accept my love?” he whispered. “Oh, Anne, my darling! it would be cruel of you to part us.”

Never more would I doubt him, never more. True, kind, good, his face was bent, waiting for the answer. My whole heart, my trust went out to him, then and for ever. I lifted my eyes with all their love, and stole my hand into his. Down came his kisses upon my lips by way of sealing the compact.

“And so you are willing to trust me without the explanation?”

How willing, none save myself could tell.

“Quite willing,” I whispered “I am certain you have not been guilty of any crime.”

“Never; so help me heaven,” he fervently answered. “But disgrace reflects upon me, for all that, and you must give your final decision when you have heard it.”

Oh, but he knew; the smile on his face be-

trayed it ; that I should never go back from him again.

I sat down in my chair : he put his elbow on the mantelpiece as before.

“ Anne, you will not run away from Chandos now.”

“ Not to-morrow, sir.”

“ Am I to be ‘sir’ always, you shy child? But about this fable of yours connecting me with Mrs. Chandos? It could scarcely have been Mrs. Penn who imparted it to you?”

“ Indeed it was. She said a great deal more than that.”

“ It is not possible she can be mistaking me for my brother,” he repeated, in deliberation with himself. “ That cannot be, for she believes him to be a fugitive. This is very strange, Anne.”

Perhaps Mrs. Penn is false ? I thought in my inmost heart. Perhaps she has a motive in wishing me to quit Chandos ? She had certainly done her best to forward it—and to prejudice me against him.

“ Do you *know* Mrs. Penn to be true to your



interests, Mr. Chandos? I mean to those of the family?"

"I know nothing about her. Of course but for being supposed to be true and honourable, she would not have been admitted here. My mother—— Hark! What's that?"

A sound of wheels was heard, as of a carriage being driven to the door. Mr. Chandos turned to listen. It struck me that a sort of dread rose to his countenance.

"What troubles you?" I whispered, approaching him. "You look as if there were cause for fear."

He touched me to be quiet, listening while he answered—

"There is ever cause for fear in this unhappy house. Do you remember the night that the police rode up, Anne? I thought surely the blow had come. I know not whom this carriage may have brought: I am not expecting anybody."

We heard the door opened by one of the servants. Mr. Chandos took his hand off me and sat down again.

"It may be Dr. Laken, sir."

"No; he could not be back yet."

In hustled Hickens, faster than was usual with that solemn personage.

"It's Miss Emily, sir," said he, addressing Mr. Chandos. "That is, Madame de Mellissie. Her foreign French name never comes pat to me."

Miss Emily was in the room ere Hickens had done speaking, bright, handsome, gay as ever.

"There's plenty of luggage, Hickens, mind; you must see to it with Pauline," were the first words she spoke. "And how are you, Harry?" she continued, putting up her mouth to be kissed.

"This is an unexpected visit, Emily," he said, as he took the kiss. "You should have written us word, and I would have met you at the station with the carriage. How did you come from thence?"

"Oh, I got a conveyance of some sort; a fly, or a chaise; I hardly know what it was, except that I believe it had no springs, for it shook me to pieces. How is mamma?"

“ Won’t you speak to me, Madame de Mellissie ?” I asked, holding out my hand. I had stood there waiting for her to notice me, which she did not appear to have the least intention of doing ; waiting and waiting.

“ I hope you are well, Anne Hereford,” was her reply, but she pointedly and rudely neglected my offered hand.

“ Did you leave your husband well ?” Mr. Chandos hastily asked, as a sort of covering to her ill manners.

“ Well neither in health nor in temper, but as cranky as can be. I ran away.”

“ Ran away !”

“ Of course I did. There came to me a letter, some days past——”

“ Yes, I wrote to you,” I interrupted.

“ You !” she rudely said, in a condemning tone of voice, “ I am not alluding to your letter. When this other letter came, I told Alfred I must go at once to Chandos. ‘ Very well,’ said he, ‘ I shall be able to take you in a day or so.’ But the days went on, and still he was too ill ; or said he was. ‘ I *must* go,’ I said to him yester-

day morning. 'I must and I will,' and that put him up. 'Listen, *ma chère*,' cried he, in his cool way, 'I am too ill to travel, and there's nobody else to take you, so you *can't* go; therefore let us hear no more about it.' *Merci, monsieur!* I thought to myself; and I forthwith told Pauline to pack up, and get the boxes out of the house *en cachette*. Which she did: and I followed them, Alfred and Madame la Mère believing I had gone for a drive in the Bois de Boulogne. A pretty long drive they must think it by this time."

"Emily, how can you act so?" exclaimed her brother, in a tone of stern reproof.

"Now, Harry, I don't want any of your morality. Look at home, before you preach to me. What have *you* been doing the last few weeks? I have heard."

"Shall I pay for the chaise, *ma'am*?" inquired Hickens, putting in his head.

"Pay for anything and everything, Hickens," was her answer. "I have brought no money with me, to speak of. I ran away."

“Emily, how *can* you?” exclaimed Mr. Chandos, as the man withdrew.

“Rubbish! Who’s Hickens? Pauline’s sure to tell him all about it. I repeat to you, Harry, that you need not preach to me: you have more need to reform your own acts and doings. The letter I received was about you; and, from what it said, I began to think it high time that I should be at Chandos.”

“Indeed!” he quietly answered. “Pray who may have taken the trouble to write it?”

“That is what I cannot tell you. It was anonymous.”

Mr. Chandos curled his lip. “There is only one thing to do with an anonymous letter, Emily—put it in the fire, with a thought of pity for its miserable writer, and then forget it for ever. We have been dealing in anonymous letters here, lately: I received one; and the inspector of police at Warsall received one, falsely purporting to be from me. The result was that a descent of mounted police came swooping upon

us one night with sabres, drawn or undrawn, frightening sober Chandos out of its propriety."

"I never heard of such a thing!" exclaimed Madame de Mellissie, her interest momentarily diverted from her own grievances. "What did they want?"

"The inspector was led to believe I required them to take somebody into custody for theft. I assure you anonymous letters have been the fashion here lately. But they are not the less despicable."

"Shall I tell you what was in mine?"

"I do not wish to hear it."

"Ah, you are afraid," she answered, with a ringing laugh. "Conscience makes cowards of all of us."

Mr. Chandos looked anything but afraid: he stood, very calm, his head raised. Emily began taking off her things, throwing a bonnet on one chair, gloves on another, a shawl on the floor. I went forward to assist her.

"Don't touch anything of mine," she haughtily interrupted, putting herself before the shawl with

a slight stamp. "Harry, how long has mamma kept her room?"

"Ever since you left," replied Mr. Chandos.

"Oh. And you and Anne Hereford have had the sole benefit of each other's company!"

"And a very pleasant benefit, too," boldly retorted Mr. Chandos. But my cheeks were in a flame, and they both saw it.

"You wrote me word that you wished to leave," she said, turning to me. "You are no longer in my service, and are at liberty to do so. When can you be ready?"

"My preparations will not take me long," was my reply.

Little cause was there to ask what had been the purport of her anonymous letter. Who could have written it? Who could be concerning themselves about me and Mr. Chandos? Was it Mrs. Penn?

"I should like some tea," she said, as she poured out a glass of wine and drank it. "Ring the bell and order it in, Anne Hereford. While they bring it I will run up to mamma's rooms,

Harry. Won't she pull a long face when she hears that I decamped without the cognizance of *le mari et la vieille mère!*"

"Emily," said Mr. Chandos, gravely, "you cannot go into your mamma's rooms at present."

"But I will go."

"My dear, you must not; at least until I have spoken to you. There are urgent reasons against it."

"What are the reasons?"

"I will tell you later. You had better have some tea first. Shall I ring for Hill to show you a chamber?"

"I will be shown to a chamber when I have been in to mamma," she defiantly responded. "Take yourself out of the way, Harry."

For Mr. Chandos was standing between her and the door. "Emily, did I ever advise you but for your good—your comfort? Pray attend to me."

"For my good, no doubt," she said, with a gay laugh: "I don't know about my comfort. Harry, we shall come to a battle royal, if you don't move from that door. I am quite deter-



mined to go into the west wing, and I will not be stopped. Goodness me! you are trying to control me as though I were a child."

Mr. Chandos opened the door and followed her out. In the hall they stood for a moment talking together in a whisper, and I heard a cry of pain and dismay escape her lips.

## CHAPTER VI.

G E O R G E    H E N E A G E .

I SAT down with my great weight of happiness. Oh, the change that had passed over me ! He was not married ; he was true and honourable, and he loved me ! Hickens came in to remove the wine, and I chattered to him like a merry school-girl. Everything else went out of my head, even the letter I held, still unopened ; and when I should have thought of it I cannot say, but that some time later I heard the voice of Mrs. Penn in the hall, speaking in covert tones.

It came to my memory then fast enough. Was she going to steal out, as she had previously essayed to do ? I went to the door and opened it about an inch. Lizzy Dene stood there.

“ How early you are home ! ” Mrs. Penn was saying.

“ Thanks to Madam Hill ! ” grumbled Lizzy.

“She wouldn’t give me leave to go unless I’d be in by seven, or a bit later : with illness in the house, she said, there was no knowing what might be wanted.”

“Did you deliver the letter?” resumed Mrs. Penn, in the faintest possible whisper.

“Yes, ma’am,” was the ready answer. “A young man came to the door, and I asked if Mr. Barley was at home, and he said, ‘Yes, all alone,’ so I gave him the note, and he took it in.”

“Thank you, Lizzy,” answered Mrs. Penn, complacently. “There’s the five shillings I promised you.”

“Many thanks all the same to you, ma’am, but I’d rather not take it,” replied Lizzy, to my great astonishment, and no doubt to Mrs. Penn’s. “I’m well paid here, and I don’t care to be rewarded for any little extra service. It’s all in the way of the day’s work.”

They parted, Mrs. Penn going up the stairs again. But a startling doubt had come over me at Lizzy Dene’s words : could I have taken the wrong letter from the basket ? I hastened back to the light and drew it forth. No, it was all

right: it was directed to Mr. Edwin Barley. What could Lizzy Dene mean by saying she had delivered it? I wondered, as I tore it open.

“I am overwhelmed with astonishment. I was coming round to your house, in spite of your prohibition, to tell you what I have discovered, but was prevented by Mrs. Chandos. *He is here!* I am as certain of it as that I am writing these words: and it sets clear the mystery of that closely-guarded west wing, which has been as a closed book to me. Anne Hereford went surreptitiously in there just now, and saw what she describes as a tall, emaciated object, reclining in an invalid chair, whose face bore a striking resemblance to that of Harry Chandos. There can be no doubt that it is he, not the slightest in the world; you can therefore take immediate steps, if you choose, to have him apprehended. My part is now over. C. D. P.”

The contents of the letter frightened me. What mischief had I not caused by that incautious revelation to Mrs. Penn! Mrs. Penn the treacherous—as she undoubtedly was. “Take immediate steps to have him apprehended.” Who

was he? what had he done? and how did it concern Mr. Edwin Barley? Surely I ought to acquaint Mr. Chandos, and show him the note without loss of time.

The tea waited on the table, when Hickens came in with a message sent down from the west wing—that Mr. Chandos and Madame de Mellissie were taking tea there. I put out a cup, and sent the things away again, debating whether I might venture on the unheard-of proceeding of sending to the west wing for Mr. Chandos.

Yes. It was a matter of necessity, and I ought to do it. I sought for Hill. Hill was in the west wing, waiting on the tea party. Should I send Hickens to knock at the west wing door, or go myself? Better go myself, instinct told me.

I ran lightly up the stairs. Peeping out at the east wing door, listening and prying, was the head of Mrs. Penn.

“They have quite a *soirée* in the west wing to-night,” she said to me, as I passed; “a family gathering: all of them at it, save Sir Thomas. Whither are you off to so fast?”

"I have a message for the west wing," I answered, as I brushed on, and knocked at the door.

Hill came to unfasten the door. She turned desperately savage when she saw me.

"I am not come to intrude, Hill. Mr. Chandos is here, is he not?"

"What's that to anybody?" retorted Hill.

"He is wanted, that is all. Be so good as ask him to step down to the oak-parlour. At once, please; it is very pressing."

Hill banged the door in my face, and bolted it. Mrs. Penn, whose soft steps had come stealing near, seized hold of me by the gathers of my dress as I would have passed her.

"Anne, who wants Mr. Chandos? Have the police come?"

"I want him; I have a message for him," I boldly answered, the remembrance of her treachery giving me courage to say it. "Why should the police come? What do you mean?"

"As they made a night invasion of the house once before, I did not know but they might have done it again. How tart you are this evening!"

I broke from her and ran down to the parlour. Mr. Chandos was in it nearly as soon.

"Hill said I was wanted. Who is it, Anne? Do you know?"

"You must forgive me for having ventured to call you, Mr. Chandos. I have been the cause of some unhappy mischief, and how I shall make the confession to you I hardly know. But, made it must be, and there's no time to be lost."

"Sit down and don't excite yourself," he returned. "I dare say it is nothing very formidable."

"When we were speaking of the gentleman I saw before dinner in the west wing, you warned me that his being there was a secret which I must take care not to betray."

"Well?"

"I ought to have told you then—but I had not the courage—that I had already betrayed it. In the surprise of the moment, as I left the west wing after seeing him, I mentioned it to Mrs. Penn. It was done thoughtlessly; not intentionally; and I am very sorry for it."

"I am sorry also," he said, after a pause. "Mrs. Penn?" he slowly continued, as if de-

liberating whether she were a safe person or not. "Well, it might possibly have been imparted to a worse."

"Oh, but you have not heard all," I feverishly returned. "I do not think it could have been imparted to a worse than Mrs. Penn ; but I did not know it then. I believe she has been writing to Mr. Edwin Barley."

My fingers were trembling, my face I know was flushed. Mr. Chandos laid his cool hand upon me.

"Take breath, Anne ; and calmness. I shall understand it better."

I strove to do as he said, and tell what I had to tell in as few words as possible. That I had said it must be Sir Thomas Chandos : that Mrs. Penn, wildly excited, said it was not Sir Thomas ; and so on to the note she gave Lizzy Dene. Mr. Chandos grew a little excited himself as he read the note.

"Nothing could have been more unfortunate than this. Nothing ; nothing."

"The most curious thing is, that when Lizzy Dene came back she affirmed to Mrs. Penn that



she had delivered the note," I resumed. "I cannot make that out."

Mr. Chandos sat thinking, his pale face full of trouble and perplexity.

"Could Mrs. Penn have written two notes, think you, Anne?"

"I fear to think so: but it is not impossible. I only saw one in the basket; but I scarcely noticed in my hurry."

"If she did not write two, the mischief as yet is confined to the house, and I must take care that for this night at least it is not carried beyond it. After that——"

He concluded his sentence in too low a tone to be heard, and rang for Hickens. The man came immediately, and his master spoke.

"Hickens, will you lock the entrance doors of the house, back and front, and put the keys into your pocket. No one must pass out of it again to-night."

Hickens stared as if stupefied. It was the most extraordinary order ever given to him at Chandos. "Why, sir?" he cried. "Whatever for?"

"It is my pleasure, Hickens," replied Mr.

Chandos, in his quiet tone of command. "Lock the doors and keep the keys ; and suffer no person to go out on any pretence whatsoever. No person that the house contains, you understand, myself excepted. Neither Mrs. Chandos nor Mrs. Penn ; Miss Hereford"—turning to me with a half smile—"or the servants. Should any one of them present themselves at the door, and, finding it fast, ask to be let out, say you have my orders not to do it."

"Very well, sir," replied the amazed Hickens. "There's two of the maids out on an errand now, sir ; are they to be let in ?"

"Certainly. But take care that you fasten the door afterwards again. Go at once and do this ; and then send Lizzy Dene to me."

Away went Hickens. Mr. Chandos paced the room until Lizzy Dene appeared.

"Did you want me, sir ?"

"I do. Come in and shut the door. What I want from you, Lizzy, is a little bit of information. If, as I believe, you are true to the house you serve, and its interests, you will give it me truthfully."

Lizzy burst into tears, without any occasion, that I could see, and hung her head. Evidently there was something or other on which she feared to be questioned.

“It’s what I always have been, sir, and what I hope I shall be. What have I done?”

“Did Mrs. Penn give you a letter, some two or three hours ago, to deliver at Mr. Edwin Barley’s?”

“Yes, sir,” was the reply, spoken without hesitation or embarrassment. Apparently that was not Lizzy Dene’s sore point.

“Did you deliver it?”

Lizzy hesitated now, and Mr. Chandos repeated his question.

“Now only to think that one can’t meet with an accident without its being known all round as soon as done!” she exclaimed. “If I had thought you had anything to do with the matter, sir, I’d have told the truth when I came back; but I was afraid Mrs. Penn would be angry with me.”

“I shall be pleased to hear that the letter was

not delivered,” said Mr. Chandos. “So tell the truth now.”

“Where I could have lost it, master, I know no more than the dead,” she resumed. “I know I put it safe in my basket; and though I did run, it could not have shaken out, because the lid was shut down; but when I got to Mr. Barley’s, and went to take it out, it was gone. Sleighted off right away; just like that letter you lost from the hall-table, sir. What to do I didn’t know, for I had given a good pull at their bell before I found out the loss. But I had got another letter in my basket——”

“Another letter?” interrupted Mr. Chandos, thinking his fears were verified.

“Leastways, as good as a letter, sir. As luck would have it, when I was running down the avenue, I met the young man from the fancy-draper’s shop in the village, and he thrust a folded letter in my hands. ‘For Lady Chandos, and mind you give it her,’ says he, ‘for it’s a list of our new fashions.’ So, what should I do, sir, when I found the other was gone, but give in the fashions to Mr. Barley’s young man.

‘And mind you take it in to your master without no delay,’ says I, ‘for it’s particular.’ He’ll wonder what they want, sending him the fashions,” concluded Lizzy.

“You said nothing to Mrs. Penn of this?”

“Well—no, sir, I didn’t. I meant, when she found it out, to let her think I had given in the wrong letter by mistake. I don’t suppose hers was of much consequence, for it was only writ in pencil. I didn’t take the money she offered me, though; I thought that wouldn’t be fair, as I had not done the service.”

“And my desire is, that you say nothing to her,” said Mr. Chandos. “Let the matter rest as it is.”

Mr. Chandos looked very grave after Lizzy Dene withdrew, as though he were debating something in his mind. Suddenly he spoke—

“Anne, cast your thoughts back a few years. Was there any one in Mr. Edwin Barley’s house, at the time Philip King was killed, at all answering to the description of Mrs. Penn?”

I looked at him in simple astonishment.

“It has struck me once or twice that Mrs.

Penn must have been in the house, or very near it, by the knowledge she has of the details, great and small. And it would almost seem now, Anne, as though she were in league with Edwin Barley, acting as his spy."

"No one whatever was there except the servants and Charlotte Delves."

"Stop a bit. Charlotte Delves—C. D. P.; C. D. would stand for that name. Is Mrs. Penn Charlotte Delves?"

The question nearly took my breath away.

"But, Mr. Chandos, look at Mrs. Penn's hair! Charlotte Delves had pretty hair—very light; quite different from this."

He smiled sadly.

"You must be inexperienced in the world's fashions, my dear, if you have believed the present colour of Mrs. Penn's hair to be natural. She must have dyed her hair, intending, no doubt, to change it to golden: instead of which it has come out of the ordeal a blazing vermilion. I think Mrs. Penn *is* Charlotte Delves."

Little by little, as I compared the past Charlotte Delves with the present Mrs. Penn, the

truth dawned upon me. All that was obscure, that had puzzled me in the likeness I could not trace, became clear. She had grown older ; she had grown much stouter ; the shape of both figure and face had changed. Mrs. Penn, with a plump face and glowing red hair taken back, was quite another person from Miss Delves with a thin face and long fair ringlets shading it.

“ You are right,” I said, in a low, earnest tone. “ It is Charlotte Delves.”

“ And has been here trying to find out what she can of George Heneage. I see it all.”

“ But, Mr. Chandos, what is George Heneage to you ?”

“ He is my brother, Anne. *He* is George Heneage,” he added, pointing in the direction of the west wing.

He George Heneage ! I sat in greater and greater amazement. But, as I had traced the likeness in Charlotte Delves, so, now that the clue was given me, did I see that the resemblance which had so haunted me in Mr. Chandos, was to the George Heneage of that unhappy time.

“ You were but a child, you know, then. And

a child's remembrance does not retain faces very long."

"But, Mr. Chandos, how can George Heneage be your brother?"

"Is it perplexing you? Soon after the sad time of which we know too much, my father, Sir Thomas Heneage, had a large estate—this—bequeathed to him by Mr. Chandos, my mother's brother, on condition that he assumed the name. You may be sure we lost no time in doing so,—too thankful to drop our own, which George had disgraced."

"Then — his name is no longer George Heneage, but George Chandos?" I said, unable to take the facts in quickly.

"Strictly speaking, our name is Heneage-Chandos; and Heneage-Chandos we should have been always styled. But we preferred to drop the name of Heneage completely. It may be—I don't know—that we shall take it up again hereafter."

"And where has he been all this while?"

"Ah, where! You may well ask. Leading the life of a miserable, exiled man, conscious that



Edwin Barley was ever on the watch for him, seeking to bring him to trial for the murder of Philip King."

"Did your brother really do it?" I asked, in a low tone.

"In one sense, yes. He killed Philip King, but not intentionally. So much as this he said to me for the first time only two days ago. Were he brought to trial, there could be no doubt of his condemnation and execution—and only think of the awful fear that has been ours! You can now understand why I and my brother, Sir Thomas, have felt ourselves bound in honour not to marry while that possible disgrace was hanging over us. Ill-fated George!"

"Has he been concealed here always?"

"That would have been next to impossible," replied Mr. Chandos, with a half smile at my simplicity. "He has been here a short time: and no end of stratagems have we had to resort to, to conceal the fact. My mother has been compelled to feign illness, and remain in the west wing, that an excuse might be afforded for provisions and things being carried up. I have

assumed to you the unenviable character of a sleep-walker; we have suffered the report that my dead father, Sir Thomas, haunted the pine walk, without contradicting it——”

“And are you not a sleep-walker? and is there no ghost?” I breathlessly interrupted.

“The only ghost, the only sleep-walker, has been poor George,” he sadly answered. “*You* saw him arrive, Anne.”

“I!”

“Have you forgotten the night when you saw me—as you thought—dodging in and out of the trees, as if I wished to escape observation, and finally disappearing within the west wing? It was George. The next morning you accused me of having been there; I knew I had not, and positively denied it. Later I found that George had come: and then I amused you with a fable of my being addicted to sleep-walking. I knew not what else to invent; anything to cast off suspicion from the right quarter; and I feared you would be seeing him there again.”

“But is it not highly dangerous for him to have ventured here?”

“Aye. After the misfortune happened he lay a short while concealed at Heneage Grange, where we then lived, and eventually escaped to the Prussian dominions. We heard nothing of him for some time, though we were in the habit of remitting him funds periodically for his support. But one night he made his appearance here; it was not long after we had settled at Chandos; startling my mother and Hill nearly out of their senses. They concealed him in the west wing, and Lady Chandos feigned illness and remained in it with him, as she has done this time. He did not stay long; but henceforth we could be at no certainty, and took to leaving the lower entrance door of the west wing unfastened at night, so that he might enter at once, should he arrive a second time. Three or four times in all has he come, including this.”

“But it must surely be hazardous?”

“Nothing can be more so; not to speak of the constant state of suspense and anxiety it keeps us all in. He declares he is obliged to come, or die; that he is attacked with the *mal du pays*, the yearning for home, to such an

extent that when the fit comes on him, he is forced to come and risk it. More dangerous, too, than his actually being here, is his walking out at night in the grounds ; and he will do it in spite of remonstrance. George was always given to self-will."

"Does he walk out?"

"Does he? Why, Anne, need you ask the question? Sometimes at dusk, sometimes not until midnight, at any hour just as the whim takes him, out he will go. He has led so restless a life that walking once or twice in the twenty-four hours is essential, or he could not exist. Have you not seen the 'ghost' yourself more than once? Were you not terrified at him in the corridor? Do you forget when I gathered your face to me in the dark walk, while some one passed? I feared that you should see him—should detect that it was a living man, real flesh and blood, not a harmless ghost. Very glad were we when the servants, at his first visit, took up the theory of a ghost, in place of any more dangerous notion. From them it spread outside, so that the Chandos

ghost has become public rumour and public property."

"Do the servants know that you have this brother?"

"Hickens and some of the elder ones of course know it : know all he was accused of, and why he went into exile ; but so many years have elapsed since, that I feel sure the remembrance of him has nearly died out. This visit has been worse for us than any, owing to the proximity of Edwin Barley."

"You think Edwin Barley has been looking out for him?"

"Think ! I know it. Something must have arisen to give him the notion that George had returned to England, and was in hiding : though he could not have suspected Chandos, or he would have had it searched. Many things, that we were obliged to say and do, appear to have been very foolish, looking back, and they will seem still more so in after years ; but they were done in dread fear. The singular thing is that Mrs. Penn—being here to find out what she could—should not have hit upon the truth before."

“Would Mr. Edwin Barley cause him to be apprehended, do you think?”

“He will apprehend him the very moment that the news shall reach his ears,” spoke Mr. Chandos, lifting his hands in agitation. “Living, or—dead, I had all but said—at any rate, living or dying, Edwin Barley will seize upon George Heneage. I do not say but he would be justified.”

“Oh, Mr. Chandos! Can you not take him somewhere for escape?”

He sadly shook his head. “No. George is past being taken. He has grown worse with rapid quickness. Yesterday I should have said his hours were numbered: to-day he is so much better that I can only think he has entered on a renewed lease of life. At least of some days.”

“What is it that is the matter with him?”

“In my opinion it is a broken heart. He has fretted himself away. Think what existence has been for him. In exile under a false name; no home, no comfort, an innocent man’s death upon his conscience; and living, whether at home or abroad, in the ever-perpetual dread of being

called upon to answer publicly for what has been called murder. The doctors call it decline. He is a living shadow."

"And Mrs. Chandos is his wife! Oh, poor thing, what a life of sadness hers must be!"

"Mrs. Chandos was his wife; in one sense of the word is his wife still, for she bears his name," he gravely answered. "But I have a word to say to you, Anne, respecting Mrs. Chandos. Mrs. Penn—I shall begin to doubt whether every word and action of that woman be not false, put forth with a covert motive—informed you Mrs. Chandos was my wife, knowing perfectly well the contrary. Mrs. Chandos was never my wife, Anne, but she was once my love."

A chill stole over my heart.

"I met with her when she was Ethel Wynne, a lovely, soft-mannered girl, and I learned to love her with impassioned fervour. We became engaged, and were to be married later: I was only two-and-twenty then, she seventeen. She came to Heneage Grange on a visit; she and her elder sister, since dead. Little thought I that my sweet, soft-mannered girl was eaten up with am-



bition. One morning at breakfast a letter was brought in to my father. It was from India, and contained news of the death of my brother Tom ; which, I need not tell you, who know that he is alive yet, was premature. Captain Heneage had been in action, the letter stated, was desperately wounded, and taken up for dead. Tom wrote us word afterwards that it was only when they went to bury him that they discovered he was alive. But he is given to joking. Well, we mourned him as dead ; and George, in his free, careless manner, told Ethel she had better have engaged herself to him than to me, for that he could make her Lady Heneage, being the heir now, which Harry never could. That George had always admired her, was certain. He had a weakness for pretty women. But for that weakness, and Mrs. Edwin Barley's being pretty, Philip King might be alive now."

Mr. Chandos paused a moment, and then went on in a lower tone, bending rather nearer to me : " Anne, will you believe that in less than two weeks' time they had gone away together ? "

" Who had ? "



“George Heneage and Ethel Wynne. They had gone to be married. When they returned, man and wife, my mother, Lady Heneage, would have refused to receive them, but Sir Thomas, ever lenient to us all, persuaded her. A marriage entered into as theirs had been would bring plenty of punishment in its wake, he observed. The punishment—for Ethel, at any rate—had already begun. She liked me best, far best, but ambition had temporarily blinded her. She married George on the strength of his being heir apparent to the title, and news had now arrived that my brother Thomas was alive, and progressing steadily towards health.”

“And you—what did you do?” I interrupted.

“I hid my bruised feelings, and rode the high horse of mocking indifference; letting none suppose false Ethel had left a wound. The wound was there, and a pretty sharp one; five fathom deep, though I strove to bury it.” He paused an instant, and then went on. “In six months’ time she and George were tired of each other—if appearances might be trusted—and he spent a great deal of his time abroad. Ethel resented it: she

said he had no right to go out taking pleasure without her; but George laughed off the complaints in his light way. They made their home at Heneage Grange, and had been married nearly a year when George went on that fatal visit to Mr. Edwin Barley's."

"Then—when that calamity took place he had a wife!" I exclaimed in surprise: I suppose because I had never heard it at the time.

"Certainly. The shock to Ethel was dreadful. She believed him guilty. Brain fever attacked her, and she has never been quite bright in intellect since, but is worse at times than others. Hers is a disappointed life. She had married George in the supposition that he was heir to the baronetcy; she found herself the wife of an exiled man, an accused murderer."

"Has she been aware of the secret visits of her husband?"

"They could not be kept entirely from her. Since the calamity, she has never been cordial with him: acquaintances they have been, but no more: it almost seems as though Ethel had forgotten that other ties once existed between them.

She is most anxious to guard his secret ; our only fear has been that she might inadvertently betray it. For this we would have concealed from her his presence here as long as might be, but she has always found it out and resented it loudly, reproaching me and my mother with having no confidence in her. You must remember the scene in the corridor when I locked the door of your room ; Ethel had just burst into the west wing with reproaches, and they, George and my mother, were bringing her back to her own apartments. She goes there daily now, and reads the Bible to him."

How the things came out—one after the other !

"And now, Anne, I think you know all ; and will understand how, with this terrible sword—George's apprehension—ever unsheathed, I could not tell you of my love."

And what if it did ? Strike or not strike, it would be all the same to my simple heart, beating now with its weight of happiness. I believe Mr. Chandos could read this in my downcast face, for a smile was parting his lips.

“Is it to be yes in any case, Anne?”

“I—— Perhaps,” I stammered. “And then you will tell me the truth about yourself. What is it that is really the matter with you?” I took courage to ask, speaking at length of the fear that always lay upon me so heavily, and which I had been forbidden to speak about.

“The matter with me?”

“The illness that Dr. Amos said you would never get well from.”

Mr. Chandos laughed. “Why, Anne, don’t you see?—it was my brother George he spoke of, not me. I never had anything serious the matter with me in my life; we wiry-built fellows never have.”

Was it so? Could this great dread be, like the other, a myth? In the revulsion of feeling, my wits momentarily deserted me. Pulses were bounding, cheeks were blushing, eyes were thrilling; and I looked up at him asking, was it true?—was it true?

And got my answer for my pains. Mr. Chandos snatched my face to his, and kissed it as if he could never leave off again. Hot,

sweet, perfumed kisses, that seemed to be of heaven.

“But I do not quite understand yet,” I said, when I could get away. “You have looked ill; especially about the time Dr. Amos came.”

“And in one sense I was ill; ill with anxiety. We have lived, you see, Anne, with a perpetual terror upon us; never free from it a moment, by night or by day. When George was not here, there was the ever constant dread of his coming, the *watching* for him as it were; and now that he is here the dread is awful. When George grew worse, and it became necessary that some medical man should see him, Dr. Amos was summoned to ‘Mr. Harry Chandos;’ and I had a bed made up in the west wing, and secluded myself for four-and-twenty hours.”

“Did Dr. Amos think he came to you?”

“He thought so. Thought that the sickly, worn-out man he saw lying on the sofa in my mother’s sitting-room was Mr. Harry Chandos. I being all the while closely shut up from sight in my temporary chamber. Laken, who has been our medical attendant for a great many

years, and in our entire confidence, was unfortunately away from home, and we had to resort to a stratagem. It would not do to let the world or the household know that George Heneage was lying concealed at Chandos."

"Then—when Dr. Laken said Lady Chandos was emaciated and obstinate, he really spoke of *him*?"

"He did: because you were within hearing. The obstinacy related to George's persistency in taking his night walks in the grounds. It has been a grievous confinement for my mother: *she* went out a night or two ago for a stroll at dusk, and was unfortunately seen by Mrs. Penn. Hill was so cross that Mrs. Penn should have gone near the pine walk."

"How much does Madame de Mellissie know of this?" I asked.

"She was cognizant of the crime George was accused of having committed, and that he was in exile. She also knew that we always lived in dread of his coming to Chandos; and for that reason did not welcome strangers here."

"And yet she brought, and left, me!"

“But you have not proved a dangerous inmate, my dear one.”

It was kind of him to say that, but I feared I had. That Mrs. Penn had contrived to give notice to Edwin Barley, or would contrive it, was only too probable. Once the house should be opened in the morning, nothing could hinder her. Troubled and fearful, I had not spoken for some minutes, neither had he, when Madame de Mellissie's voice was heard in the hall, and he left the room.

She came into it, crossing him on the threshold. Just casting an angry and contemptuous glance on me, she withdrew, and shut the door with a heavy bang, coming back again in a short while.

“Closeted with my brother as usual!” she began, as if not one minute instead of ten had elapsed since seeing me with Mr. Chandos. “Why do you put yourself continuously in his way?”

“Did you speak to me, Madame de Mellissie?” I asked, really doubting if the attack could be meant for me.

“To whom else should I speak?” she returned, in a passionate and abrupt tone. “How dare you presume to seek to entangle Mr. Harry Chandos?”

“I do not understand you, Madame de Mellissie. I have never yet sought to entangle any one.”

“You have; you know you have,” she answered, giving the reins to her temper. “The letter I received warned me you were doing it, and that brought me over. You and he have dined alone, sat alone, walked alone; together always. Is it seemly that you, a dependant governess-girl, should cast a covetous eye upon a Chandos?”

My heart was beginning to beat painfully. What defence had I to make?

“Why did you leave me here, madam?”

“Leave you here! Because it suited my convenience. But I left you here as a dependant: a servant, so to say. I did not expect you to make yourself into my brother’s companion.”

“Stay, Madame de Mellissie. I beg you to reflect a little before you reproach me. How could



I help being your brother's companion, *when he chose to make himself mine*. This, the oak-parlour, was the general sitting-room; no other was shown to me for my use; was it my fault that Mr. Chandos also made it his? Could I ask to have my breakfast and dinner served in my bed-chamber?"

"I don't care," she intemperately rejoined. "I say that had you not been lost to all sense of propriety, of the fitness of things, you would have kept yourself beyond the notice of Mr. Harry Chandos. To-morrow morning you will leave."

"To whom are you speaking, Emily?" demanded a quiet voice behind us.

It was his; it was his. I drew back with a sort of gasping sob.

"I am speaking to Anne Hereford," she defiantly answered. "Giving her a warning of summary ejection. She has been in the house rather too long!"

"You might have moderated your tone, at any rate, Emily: and perhaps would, had you known to whom you were offering a gratuitous insult," he said, with admirable calmness.

"I spoke to Anne Hereford."

"Yes. And to my future wife."

The crimson colour flashed into her beautiful face. "Harry!"

"Therefore I must beg of you to treat Miss Hereford accordingly."

"Are you mad, Harry?"

"Perfectly sane, I hope."

"It cannot be your intention to marry *her*? How can you think of so degrading yourself?"

"You are mistaking the case altogether, Emily. I, and my family with me, will be honoured by the alliance."

"What on earth do you mean?"

A half smile crossed his face at her wondering look, but he gave no explanation: perhaps the time had not come. I escaped from the room, and he came after me.

"Anne, I want you to go with me to the west wing. George says he should like to see you."

I went up with him at once. George Heneage—I shall never call him Chandos, and indeed he had never assumed the name—sat in the same easy-chair with the pillows at his back. Mr.

Chandos put me a seat near, and he took my hands within his wasted ones. They called him better. Better! He, with the white, drawn face, the glassy eyes, the laboured breath!

“My little friend Anne! Have you quite forgotten me?”

“No; I have remembered you always, Mr. Heneage. I am sorry to see you look so ill.”

“Better that I should look so. My life is a burden to me, and to others. I have prayed to God a long while to take it, and I think He has at last heard me. Leave us, Harry, for a few minutes.”

I felt half frightened as Mr. Chandos went out. What could he want with me?—and he looked so near death!

“You have retained a remembrance of those evil days?” he abruptly began, turning on the pillow to face me.

“Every remembrance, I think. I have forgotten nothing.”

“Just so: they could but strike forcibly on a child’s heart. Well, ever since Harry told me that it was *you* who were in this house, a day or

two back now, I have thought I must see you at the last. I should not like to die leaving you to a wrong impression. You have assumed, with the rest of the world, that I murdered Philip King?"

I hesitated, really not knowing what to say.

"But I did not murder him. The shot from my gun killed him, but not intentionally. As Heaven, soon to be my judge, hears me, I tell you the truth. Philip King had angered me very much. As I saw him in the distance smoking a cigar, his back against the tree's trunk, I pointed my gun at him, and put my finger on the trigger, saying, "How I should like to put a shot into you!" Without meaning it—without meaning it, the gun went off, Anne: my elbow caught against the branch of a tree, and it went off and shot him. I had rather—yes, even then—that it had shot myself."

"But why did you not come forward and say so, Mr. Heneage?"

"Because the fact paralysed me, making me both a fool and a coward, and the moment for avowals went by, passed for ever. I would have

given my own life to undo my work and restore that of Philip King. It was too late. All was too late. So I have lived on as I best could, hiding myself from the law, an exile from my country, my wife a stranger; regarded by the world as a murderer, liable to be called upon at any moment to expiate it, and with a man's death upon my soul. Over and over again would I have given myself up, but for the disgrace it would bring to my family."

"I thought it might be an accident, Mr. Heneage—have always thought it," I said, with a sign of relief.

"Thank God, yes! But the wicked wish had been there, though uttered in reckless sport. Oh child, don't you see how glad I shall be to go? Christ has washed away sins as red as mine. Not of my sins, comparatively speaking, has the care lain heavily upon me night and day; but of another's."

Did he mean Selina's? "Of whose, sir?"

"Philip King's. I gave him no time to pray for them. There's a verse in the Bible, Anne, that has brought me comfort at times," he whis-

pered, with feverish eagerness, gazing at me with his earnest, yearning eyes. "When the disciples asked of the Redeemer who then can be saved, there came in answer the loving words 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"

He might not have said more; I don't know; but Hill came in to announce Dr. Laken. Her face of astonishment when she saw me sitting there was ludicrous to behold. George Heneage wrung my hand as I left him.

"You see, Hill, they ask me in here of themselves," I could not help saying, in a sort of triumph, as she held the green baize door open for me.

Hill returned a defiant grunt by way of answer, and I brushed past Dr. Laken as he came along the gallery with another gentleman, who was dressed in the garb of a clergyman.

## CHAPTER VII.

### AN IGNOMINIOUS EXIT.

THE windows were thrown open to the bright morning air; the late autumn birds were singing, the trees were gently waving; even the gloomy pine-walk opposite had a ray of sun-light on it. Little thought I as I stood in the oak-parlour with my great happiness, little thought the servants as they went about their work, that some one lay dead in the west wing.

Breakfast waited on the table; the postman came with the letters; Hickens looked in to see if he might bring the urn. He waited on us far more than the rest did, although he was butler, knowing that Mr. Chandos liked it.

A stir in the hall at last: Mrs. Penn's voice speaking to Lizzy Dene. The tones were low, but they reached my ear.

"I cannot think you delivered that letter last

evening, Lizzy. I ought to have received an answer long before this."

"Not deliver it, ma'am!" returned Lizzy, with every sound of surprise. "I gave it in to the young man at the door."

"Wait a moment, Lizzy: what a hurry you are in! Are you sure Mr. Edwin Barley was at home?"

"Of course I am not sure," returned Lizzy: and I pictured Mrs. Penn to myself at that moment: her cheeks flushing red, her eyes flashing fire.

"You deceitful woman! You told me last night Mr. Edwin Barley was at home!"

"Ma'am, I told you the young man said he was at home. I can't stay here a minute longer: if Hill finds me gossiping here, she'll be fit to pull my ears for me."

A slight rustling in the portico. I looked from the window and saw Mrs. Penn go flying away as speedily as middle-aged, portly women can fly. Mr. Chandos came into the room at the same time.

"How is your brother, Mr. Chandos?"



“Better, I trust, than he has been for many years in this life. It is over, Anne. He died at twelve last night.”

The words struck on me as a great shock. Over! Dead!

“He was sensible to the last moment. It was a happy death,” continued Mr. Chandos, in a low, solemn tone. “Truly may it be said that he has ‘come out of great tribulation.’ God receive and bless him!”

I sat down. Mr. Chandos turned over the letters in an abstracted kind of manner, but did not really look at them. When I thought I might venture to speak, I mentioned Mrs. Penn’s reproach to Lizzy Dene, and her running off after (there was no doubt) to Mr. Edwin Barley.

“Ay, I saw her go,” he replied. “The answer she has been waiting for were the police, on their mission to arrest my brother George. They may come now. And presently will do so,” he added, “for I have sent for them.”

“For the police again! What for?”

He made no answer. Emily came in, looking as he did, rather subdued. She spoke civilly

to me : with death in a house people keep down their temper. Mr. Chandos rang the bell for breakfast, and then we all stood at the window.

“Where’s Dr. Laken ?” asked Emily.

“Gone out,” replied Mr. Chandos. “He breakfasted early.”

“How unfortunate it is that I should have arrived just now !” she exclaimed, after a pause, during which we were all silent. “The carriages must not go out I suppose for the next few days.”

“Ill doing is sure to bring its own punishment, Emily,” Mr. Chandos said to her, jestingly, with a sad smile. “You should not have run away.”

“We shall have Alfred over after me, I expect. His gastric fever will politely vanish when it is necessary that his wife should be looked up. But I am *glad* that I was here, Harry, after all,” she added, her voice changing to one of deep feeling, “for it enabled me to see the last of *him*.”

“I am glad that he was here,” observed Mr. Chandos, “for it afforded the opportunity of his receiving comforts and attendance in his illness

that he could not have had abroad. Now that the awful dread of his being discovered has passed away, I see how certainly all things were for the best."

"He stayed here a long while this time."

"He was too ill to leave. We could not urge it. The final end seemed rapidly and surely approaching."

"Do you call his illness consumption?"

"Not the consumption that attacks most people. If ever man died of a broken heart, George has."

"Did he come home to die? I mean, knowing that he was soon about to die?"

"No. He was weak and emaciated when he came, worn to a shadow; but he did not become really ill, dangerously ill, until afterwards."

"Do the servants know of it?" she asked, lowering her voice. "Will they be told of it?"

"Certainly not. We hope to keep it private to the end."

"But there must be——"

"Yes, yes," he hastily interrupted, seeing she

would have alluded to the funeral. "Laken manages all that. What a bright morning it is."

Mr. Chandos leaned from the window as if to turn the conversation. Emily, easily swayed, plucked a piece of mignonette.

"I suppose mamma will come down stairs to-day. Well, it's time she did."

"It is," asserted Mr. Chandos.

"For more reasons than one," she tartly added, which was a lance-shaft at me.

Hickens came in with the urn. Seeing the letters lying there untouched, he spoke with the familiarity of a privileged servant.

"The Indian mail is in, sir."

Mr. Chandos turned quickly to the table. "I see it is, Hickens." But I don't think he had seen it until then.

"I suppose there's nothing for me from Alfred," said Madame de Mellissie, languidly looking round. "I'm not anxious to read it if there is: it would only be full of groans and scolding. Or from Tom, either? He never writes to me."

Mr. Chandos shook his head. "There's only one from Tom, and that is to me."

"But I see another Indian letter," she said, slowly approaching the table. "It has a black seal."

"Not from Thomas: it is in a strange handwriting. It is addressed to my mother."

"Any letters for my lady, sir?" asked Hill, entering the parlour.

"Two. One of them from India, tell her; but not from Sir Thomas."

Hill retreated with the letters. Emily placed herself in my seat at the head of the table, and we began breakfast. It was a poor meal for all of us that morning. Mr. Chandos drank his coffee at a draught, and opened his brother's letter.

"They were on the eve of action, Emily," he presently said. "Just going into it when Thomas wrote this. Some local engagement."

"Is it well over?"

"I hope so. But he closed this letter at once. Here is what he says in conclusion: 'I shall drop this into the post now, and if I come out of the turmoil safely, give you a second note to say so. That is if the post should not have

gone : if it has, you must wait another fortnight.' Where's the evening paper ?" added Mr. Chandos, seeking out a newspaper which had come with the letters, and tearing it open. "News of this action, however unimportant it was, ought to have come by telegraph."

He had scarcely said this when Hill came in, speaking and looking like one in alarm. I thought of the police ; I fancy Mr. Chandos did.

"Sir—Mr. Harry—my lady wishes you to come to her instantly."

He appeared aroused by the tone—or the looks—and went out at once, opening the sheets of the newspaper as he did so. Madame de Mellissie demanded of Hill what he was wanted for.

"I hardly know what, ma'am. Something very sad, I fear, has happened."

Emily started to her feet. "Hill, that letter never contained bad news from India ?—from Sir Thomas ?"

"It has got bad news of some sort in it, for certain," was Hill's rejoinder. "My lady gave a great scream before she had read three lines, and said some confused words about her 'darling

son Thomas.' The fear upon me, ma'am, is, that he has been hurt in battle."

Worse than that! worse than that! It came upon me with a prevision as I thought of the black seal and the strange hand-writing. Emily, impulsive in all she did, went running up to the west wing. While I waited alone for them to return with some news, good or bad, I heard Mrs. Penn come in and accost Lizzy Dene, who was rubbing the brasses in the hall.

"Where is the letter I gave you last night?" she curtly demanded, her tone very sharp.

"Why, ma'am, what's the use of asking me?" returned the undaunted Lizzy, after a faint pause. "Mr. Edwin Barley's people must know more about that."

"The letter you delivered was not my letter."

"Not your letter!" repeated Lizzy Dene, evidently affecting the most genuine surprise. "I don't know what you mean, ma'am."

"The letter you left at Mr. Edwin Barley's, instead of being the one I handed to you, was some rubbishing circular of the fashions. How dared you do such a thing?"

"My goodness me!" exclaimed Lizzy. "To think of that! But, Mrs. Penn, it's not possible."

"Don't talk to me about its not being possible! You have been wilfully careless. I must have my letter produced."

"I declare to goodness I don't know where it is, or what has become of it, if—as you say, ma'am, it was not the one I gave in to the young man," spoke Lizzy, this time with real earnestness. "I had a letter of fashions in my basket; but it's odd I could make such a mistake."

"You did make it," Mrs. Penn angrily rejoined. "Where is the letter now?"

"Ma'am, I can't imagine. It must have been spirited away."

"Don't talk nonsense to me about 'spirited.' If you gave in the one for the other, you must still have had my letter left in your basket. What did you do with it?"

"If you offered me a thousand pounds to tell, I couldn't," was Lizzy's answer. "Looking upon it as nothing but a letter of the fashions, I thought it was of no moment, else I remember



opening my basket after leaving Mr. Barley's, and seeing there was nothing in it. I wondered then what could have gone with the fashions. I'm sure, ma'am, I am very sorry."

Mrs. Penn went upstairs. It was apparently a profitless inquiry. Lizzy Dene rubbed away again at her brass, and I waited and waited. The servants began to stand about in groups, coming perpetually into the hall; the rumour that something was wrong in India had spread. By-and-by the truth was brought down by Hill, with great tears upon her face. Sir Thomas Chandos was dead.

It was not a false report, as had once come, of his death. Ah, no. He had fallen in battle, gallantly leading his men to the charge. The Commander-in-chief in India had written to Lady Chandos with his own hand: he said how much her son was regretted—that all the officers who could be spared attended the funeral. A shot had struck him in the breast. He had but time to say a few words, and died, his mother's name being the last upon his lips.

Hickens entered the oak-parlour and drew

down the white blinds. While talking of Sir Thomas he burst into tears. It all proved to me how much Thomas Chandos had been liked by those about him.

The breakfast things were taken away; an hour passed, and the morning was growing weary, when Mr. Chandos came down, traces of emotion on his face. Alas! he was no longer "Mr." but Sir Harry Chandos.

The first person I heard give him his title was Dr. Laken. How strange it was!—had the news arrived only on the previous morning, the title must have remained in abeyance. Poor, banned, dying George had been the heir to it by right of birth; but I suppose the law would not have given it to him. Dr. Laken called Mr. Chandos "Sir Harry" three or four times in the presence of the servants very pointedly. I thought he wanted to impress tacitly upon them the fact that there was no intervening heir. It was very strange; all: those blinds that they had not dared to draw down for George, the grief they had not liked to show, the mourning they might have been doubtful whether to assume; all did

duty for both brothers now, and might be open and legitimate.

"I think the shadow of death had fallen upon Thomas when he wrote," said Mr. Chandos, in a low tone. And Dr. Laken echoed the words questioningly.

"The shadow of death?"

"I mean the prevision of it. Throughout his letter to me a vein of sadness runs; and he concludes it, 'Farewell, Harry; God bless you!' He never so wrote before. You shall read the letter, Laken: my mother has it now."

Lady Chandos had been coming down that day, they said; but the news had stopped it, and she would not now be seen until the morrow. The morning went on. Two official-looking people came, gentlemen, and were taken by Dr. Laken to the west wing. I gathered that it had something to do with identification, in case there should be any doubt afterwards of the death: both of them had known George Heneage in the days gone by.

The blinds were down throughout the house. Every room was dull. Madame de Mellissie

evidently found it so, and came in listlessly to the oak-parlour. She seemed very cross: perhaps at seeing her brother there; but he had only come to it a minute before.

“Harry, I suppose Chandos will be looking up again, and taking its part in county gaieties after awhile—as it never has done yet.”

“Yes,” he answered, “after a while.”

“It would not be a bad plan for me to reside here occasionally as its mistress. Mamma goes back to the old Hencage homestead: she always intended to do so, if this crisis came in poor George’s life, leaving you here to manage the estate for Thomas. And now it is yours, to manage for yourself. What changes!”

“Changes indeed. I wish I could be the manager for him still.”

“You will want a mistress for it; and I shall be glad to escape at times from home. I get sick and tired of Paris.”

“Many thanks, Emily, but the future mistress of Chandos is already bespoken.”

Her fair face flushed; and there was a very tart ring in her voice when she spoke again.

“Do you forget that your position is changed? When you gave me that hint last evening, you were, comparatively speaking, an obscure individual; now you are Sir Harry Chandos, a powerful and very wealthy baronet.”

What he answered, I know not. There was a smile on his face as I left the room and strolled outside. The sound of approaching footsteps caused me to look down the avenue, and the look sent me running in again. Two of the police who had been there before were approaching on foot.

“I have been waiting for them,” said Mr. Chandos, quietly. I *cannot* get quite at once into the way of calling him anything else. “Emily, will you oblige me by going up to Mrs. Chandos, and make some excuse for taking her into the west wing at once. You can stay here, or go to another room, as you like, Anne.”

I went up to my chamber. Madame de Melissie was already passing along the gallery, her arm linked within that of Mrs. Chandos. Mrs. Penn advanced to the well of the staircase and

saw the police. A glow of triumph overspread her whole face.

“Sooner here than I thought for!” she exclaimed. “You will see something now, Anne Hereford.”

They came up the stairs, Mr. Chandos with them. Mrs. Penn retreated to the door of the east wing, but she could not resist the temptation of standing at it to look. They went towards her.

“Not here,” she said, waving her hand in the direction of the west wing. “The person for whom your visit is intended is *there*.”

“Pardon me, madam,” interposed Mr. Chandos; “the visit of these officers is to *you*.”

“To me! What do you mean?” she asked, after a pause, her voice rising to a shriek.

Never did I see a change so great come over a human countenance. They all retreated into the east wing, and the door was closed. What took place I learnt later.

In the most courteous manner possible, consistent with the circumstances, Mr. Chandos explained to Mrs. Penn why the police had come

for *her*. He had reason to believe *she* was the person who had been disturbing the tranquillity of Chandos, he said. When she had offered her boxes for search before, he had declined to permit them to be touched: he must, much as he regretted the necessity, order them to be searched now. All this we heard later. Mrs. Penn was taken to. What she said, never transpired: resistance would have been simply foolish; and she made up for it by insolence. The police quietly did their duty; and found ample proof: a few skeleton keys, that would open any lock in the house, the chief. Her own lace was there; Mr. Chandos's memorandum-book. She had come into the house a spy; feverishly hoping to find out the abiding place of George Heneage.

Her bitter animosity against him had but grown with years. An accidental circumstance had brought to her a suspicion that George Heneage's hiding-place was in England; and she had laid her plans and entered Chandos in the full intention of discovering it. My presence there had somewhat baffled her: she could not go peeping about in my sight; she took Mr.



Chandos's private book from his desk in the hope that it might help her to the discovery she had at heart, and then invented the story of losing her lace to divert the scent from herself. Later, she conceived another scheme—that of getting me out of the house; and she stole the money to put it into my box; and arranged the supposed opening of her reticule in my room, and the reading of her sealed letter; and abstracted the letter I had put on the hall-table, hoping Mr. Chandos would fall into the trap and send me from Chandos. *Now* could be understood her former anxiety that the police should search her boxes and mine; hers were ready for the inspection, mine had the money in them; and, at that time (as I knew later), also the memorandum-book. Something else was found in her boxes besides skeleton keys—a grey cloak. Putting one thing with another, Mr. Chandos thought he had little need of further speculation as to who had stopped his horse in the avenue that night, and caused his fall from it. And the reason may as well be mentioned here, though it is anticipating our knowledge of it. She had



lingered about the private groves of Chandos until dusk that afternoon, hoping to see Mr. Edwin Barley whose house she was forbidden ; in going forth at length, openly, having put her cloak on because she was cold—and how it was Hill had not seen it on her arm when talking with her in the portico, was a mystery, for she had brought it to Chandos, left it in the hall there, and taken it upon her departure—in going down the avenue she met Mr. Chandos riding up it. She had never before seen him, and she took him in the dusk for his brother. She actually thought she was encountering George Heneage ; and the noise with which she approached the horse and flung up her arms, was not made to frighten the animal, but simply to express execration, in her great surprise. At the same moment, even as it escaped her, she discovered her mistake, and that it was not George Heneage.

“ Now, madam,” said Mr. Chandos, the search over, the proofs in the officers’ hands, “ what have you to urge why I should not give you into custody ? You have been living in my mother’s house under false colours ; you have

been rifling locks; you have taken my money; you have been writing anonymous letters, and carrying tales to Mr. Edwin Barley."

"All that I have done, I was justified in doing," she answered, braving it out. "I was at work in your house, Harry Chandos, as a detective: my acts bore but one aim—the discovery of your brother, the murderer. And I have succeeded. In an hour's time from this, perhaps, the tables will be turned. As to your money, Mr. Chandos, it is wrapped in paper and directed to you. I don't steal money."

"What palliation have you to offer for your conduct?—what excuse against my giving you into custody?" repeated Mr. Chandos.

"If you choose to do it, *do* it," she returned. "Some one of far greater import than I will be shortly taken into custody from this house. I am of the kin of the Barleys: you and they are implacable enemies: all stratagems are fair when the discovery of criminals, hiding from the law, is in question. I have only done my duty; I would do it again. Give me into custody if

you like, Mr. Chandos. The tables will soon be turned."

"No, they will not be turned, in the sense you would insinuate, and for that reason I can afford to be generous," answered Mr. Chandos. "Had real harm come of this matter, I would have prosecuted you to the utmost rigour of the law. But, as it is beyond your power now, or Mr. Edwin Barley's either, to do us harm, you may go from us scot-free. But I cannot allow you to remain longer at Chandos. Forgive the seeming inhospitality, if I say I would prefer that you should not wait to partake of another meal in the house. Your things shall be sent after you. Or, if you prefer to gather them together, these officers will wait while you do it, and then escort you from my house into that of Mr. Edwin Barley."

"I will not be escorted abroad by police officers," she passionately answered.

"You possess no choice, madam. I have, so far, given you into their charge: and they will take care to undertake it."

A very short while seemed to suffice to put

her things together, and Mrs. Penn came forth attended by the two officers. In some mood of reckless defiance, or perhaps to conceal herself as much as possible from the gaze of the world, she had put on the grey cloak and drawn the hood over her head.

Mr. Chandos recognised her at once, as she had looked that night. He could but be a gentleman, and had gone out to the hall in courtesy when she came down to depart. The sight of her thus startled him for a moment.

“Ah, I should have known you anywhere, Mrs. Penn. What had I or my horse done to you that you should attack us?”

She turned and faced him. It really seemed as though she believed herself in the right in all the past acts, and felt proud to have done so well. All this while, it must be remembered, she supposed George Heneage was alive in the west wing, and would soon be taken from it to a criminal prison. She could afford to make concessions now.

“It was not you or your horse I attacked intentionally. I mistook you for another. For

that brother of yours, Mr. Chandos, whose liberty will soon be put beyond jeopardy, and his life after it. Your great likeness to George Heneage, as he looked in those old days at Hallam, is unfortunate. For one thing, it has caused me to hate you ; when, to speak candidly, I think in yourself there is not much to hate. You ”—turning her flashing eyes on the men —“ are seeing me out of the house because I have acted my part effectually in it ; a part that Sir Richard Mayne himself would say I was justified in ; but there is a greater criminal concealed above, for whom a warrant is, as I expect, already in force.”

“ You are wrong,” said Mr. Chandos. “ Were the whole establishment of Scotland Yard to make their appearance here, each with a warrant in his hand, they would scarcely execute it. It has been a long, a weary, and a wearing battle : Edwin Barley against George Heneage : but God has shown himself on the side of mercy.”

The words puzzled her a little. “ Has he escaped ? ” she fiercely asked. “ Has he left the house ? ”

“He has not left it, Mrs. Penn ; he is in the west wing.”

She threw up her head with a glow of triumph, and walked rapidly away down the broad walk, the policemen escorting her.

Standing at the back of the hall in utter amazement, partly at seeing Mrs. Penn go forth at all, partly at the object she presented in the grey cloak, was Lizzy Dene. “Miss,” she said to me, as I stood just inside the great dining-room, “I should say she must have been the one to frighten Black Knave that night.”

“Perhaps she was, Lizzy. Her cloak is grey.”

An impulse came over me that I would ask Lizzy Dene the motive of her suspicious conduct in the past. Now that the culprit had turned out to be Mrs. Penn, Lizzy Dene must have been innocent. Stepping within the large dining-room, I asked her there and then.

“Ah,” said she, with a sort of fling out of the hands, habitual to her when annoyed or in pain, “I don’t mind telling now. I was in trouble at that time.”

“What do you mean, Lizzy?”

“I have got a brother, miss ; as steady, well-meaning a man as you’d wish to see,” she answered, coming nearer and dropping her voice to a low tone. “He came into this neighbourhood in search of work, he and his wife. Oh, but it’s she that’s the plague; and a fine worry he has had with her, on and off. She’s wild ; if there’s a wake or a dance within ten miles, she’ll be off after it : and at times she has been seen the worse for drink. Not that you’d think it, to look at her ; she’s a pretty, neat, jaunty young woman ; never a pleasanter than she when she chooses. Well, try as he would, he couldn’t get work in these parts, except an odd job now and again : and you know, miss, when everything is going out, and nothing’s coming in, it don’t take long for any few pounds that may have been saved in an old stocking, to come to an end.”

“That’s true enough, Lizzy.”

“*Theirs* did. And what should they do when all was gone but come to me to help them. I did it. I helped them till I was tired, till I could help no longer. She, it was, mostly that asked ; he’d never have begged a sixpence from



me but when driven to it by sheer want. She pestered my very life out, coming here continually, and when I told her I had no more money to give, and it was of no use asking for it, then she prayed for broken victuals. Things had got very low with them. 'Who's that woman that's always creeping here after Lizzy Dene!' the servants said. 'Who's that man that we see her with!' they'd say again. And I did not choose to say who. Both of them had got shabby then, in rags almost; and he, what with the ill luck and her conduct, had been seen twice in drink. My lady is excessively particular that the servants she has about her shall belong to respectable people; Hill, she's always on the watch; and what I feared was that I might be turned from my place. It was not a pleasant life for me, miss."

I thought it could not have been.

"One afternoon—the same that the accident occurred to Mr. Chandos—Tilda had been up to the house, begging as usual. She vowed, if I would not relieve her with either money or food, to do some damage to the family: but she had



been having a drop of beer, and I paid no attention to her, and wouldn't give her anything. I may be giving for ever, I said to her, and she went away, threatening. After she was gone, I kept thinking over what she had said—that she'd do some damage to the family—the words wouldn't go away from me, and I got right down frightened, lest she should put her threat in force. What if she should fire one of the haystacks, or poison the poultry?—all sorts of horrors I kept on imagining. I begged some cold meat of the cook, inventing a story of a poor sick family, and collected some broken bits of bread, with a pinch of tea, and ran out with it all in a basket, at the dusk hour. They were lodging in one of the lanes close by; and when I got there I found Tilda had not been in. I couldn't stop; I gave the things to John, and told him he must keep Tilda away or I should lose my place; he promised he'd do what he could, but added that I knew as well as he did how little she'd be said. In hurrying back through the avenue, with my basket, I came upon Mr. Chandos lying there; you were stand-

ing by him. Miss, when I heard what had happened, as true as that we are here, I was afraid that she had done it. I went back and taxed her with it; she had come in then, but she was sullen, and would not say yes nor no. I was frightened out of my senses, for fear it should come out; and I tried to lay it upon the gipsies. But the next day, when her temper came to her, she vowed and protested that she'd had nothing to do with it. I thought then it really was the gipsies, and wished to bring it home to them. That's the truth, miss, as I'm here living."

"And what were you doing in my room that night, Lizzy?"

"What night, miss?"

"When I surprised you, and you appeared so confused. The excuse you made was that you were looking for the ghost."

"And so I was looking for it, miss," she answered: "I was doing nothing else. One of the girls had said the ghost was abroad that night, and I thought I'd look. Between Tilda and the ghost my time was a bad one just then. I'm sure I was thankful when she and John left

these parts. He has got work at the malting in a distant town, and they are doing well. I wish the ghost could be got rid of as easily."

If Lizzy Dene had but known how entirely the poor ghost had gone out of the world for ever! Would Chandos ever lose its belief in it?

"I have told you this, miss, because I thought you seemed to suspect me; and I didn't deserve it. I'm true to the family, to the backbone, miss; and so I always will be. My lady has confidence in me; she has known me a long while."

The explanation over, Lizzy Dene left me. I crossed the hall to enter the oak-parlour just in time to see Hickens open the front door to a visitor, and to hear a colloquy. My heart seemed to shrink within me at the voice, for it was Mr. Edwin Barley's. What could have brought *him* to the house, boldly inquiring for its inmates?

It appeared that Mrs. Penn, on her stealthy visit to his house that morning, had not seen him. Upon inquiring for Mr. Barley she was told he had gone out betimes, shooting. The information took her aback. Go out shooting,

when his enemy, for whom he had been searching night and day these ten years was found to be close at hand, waiting to be apprehended ! And she forthwith accused the footman of not delivering to his master the note left at the house the previous night, upon which she had the pleasure of hearing that the note was duly delivered to Mr. Edwin Barley, and turned out to be a circular of the fashions. All she could do then was to write a few lines giving him the information about George Heneage, with a charge that it should be put into Mr. Barley's hands the instant he set foot in the house. But Mr. Barley did not return to it quickly. The birds were shy that day.

Later, when he was at length going home, his gun in one hand and a brace of pheasants in the other, he encountered a procession. Turning out at the lodge gates came Mrs. Penn, one policeman walking by her side, another behind ; and, following on, Mrs. Penn's luggage in a truck propelled by a man in the Chandos livery. Mr. Edwin Barley naturally stopped ; although he had

not been on good terms with Mrs. Penn for some years ; and inquired the meaning of what he saw.

“ You are the only relative I have left in the world, Mr. Edwin Barley ; will you, as such, suffer this indignity to be put upon me ? ” were the first words she spoke. And he, thus called upon, turned in his haughty, menacing manner on the officers. She *was* his relative, as she said, and he possessed some right feeling.

“ What is the meaning of this ? Unhand the lady ? Why are you guarding her in that offensive manner ? ”

“ We have orders, sir, to see the lady safely away from Chandos.”

“ Who gave you the orders ? ”

“ Mr. Chandos.”

Mr. Edwin Barley said something about making Mr. Chandos retract his orders before the day was over ; but the men were not to be intimidated.

“ The lady has not been behaving on the square, sir, and we thought at first she would be

given into custody. But Mr. Chandos considered it over; and said, as she had been able to effect no great harm, he'd let her go."

Mr. Edwin Barley looked to Mrs. Penn for an explanation. Instead of giving it, she whispered in his ear the information about George Heneage. For the first time for years, Mr. Edwin Barley's face twitched with powerful emotion.

"WHAT do you say?" he asked in his surprise and bewilderment.

"What I say is plain: George Heneage, the murderer of your ward, the indirect murderer of your wife, is in concealment at Chandos," said Mrs. Penn, rather tragically. "The mysteries of that west wing have been cleared to me. Anne Hereford penetrated to it yesterday for some purpose of her own, and saw him: an emaciated being, she described him, bearing a striking resemblance to Harry Chandos. Now what do you say to my having entered the house as a detective, Mr. Edwin Barley? And it is for having pursued my investigations that Mr. Chandos has turned me forth in this ignominious manner."

Mr. Edwin Barley drew in his lips. She said not a word, be it understood, of the illegitimate mode in which she had pursued the said investigation. He turned matters rapidly over in his mind, and then addressed the policeman.

“What were you intending to do with this lady?”

“Our orders were to see her into your house, sir. Nothing more.”

“My mission in this part of the world is over,” interrupted Mrs. Penn; “I shall leave it for London this afternoon. Until then, say for an hour or two, I shall be glad to find a shelter in your house, Mr. Edwin Barley.”

“Very good. After that you are at liberty, I presume, to take orders from me?” he added to the officers. And they signified they were if he had any to give.

“You can then follow me to Chandos. Stay outside the house, and be ready to obey the signal I shall give you. Be prepared to take into custody a criminal who has been evading the law for years, and who will probably make a desperate resistance. What do you say? No warrant?”

Nonsense. I am in the commission of the peace, and will absolve you of any consequences."

Laying his gun and birds on the top of the luggage, Mr. Edwin Barley turned to Chandos. The policemen, who had not the remotest intention of quitting their prisoner until they had seen her within Mr. Barley's doors, continued their way thither. Thus it happened: and the voice of Edwin Barley demanding to see Lady Chandos greeted my dismayed ears as I crossed the hall. Why he should have asked for Lady Chandos, he himself best knew: the demand was an imperative one.

"My lady cannot be seen, sir," was the reply of Hickens. "She is better, I hear; but she is not yet out of her rooms. Sir Harry is within."

"Who do you say is within?" cried Mr. Edwin Barley, probably thinking his ears might deceive him.

"Sir Harry Chandos."

"*Sir* Harry," repeated Mr. Edwin Barley, wondering doubtless whether Hickens had lost his senses. "What do you mean by calling him that?"

"I call him nothing but what's right, sir.



He is Sir Harry now, unfortunately : that is, unfortunately for poor Sir Thomas. News came this morning, sir, that Sir Thomas has been killed in battle. We have got the house shut up for him."

Mr. Edwin Barley took a step backwards, and looked at the white blinds, closely drawn behind the windows. The tidings took him by surprise. Having gone out shooting before the letters and papers were delivered, he was in ignorance of the morning's news.

"I am sorry to hear it," he said. "It is an additional blow for Lady Chandos; and she does not need it. Sir Thomas was the best of the three sons: I had no grudge against him. But Mr. Harry Chandos does not take the title, my man."

"Oh yes, he does, sir. He is now Sir Harry Chandos."

"I tell you *no*," returned Mr. Edwin Barley, with a grim smile. "He is just as much Sir Harry Chandos as I am: it is not he who comes into the title. Let it pass, however."

"Did you want him, sir?" inquired Hickens,

quitting at once the controversy like a well-trained servant.

“ I do. But I would very much have preferred to see Lady Chandos first.”

“ That is quite out of the question, sir,” concluded Hickens, as he conducted his visitor to the state drawing-room. Oh, but it was a relief to me—shivering just inside the oak-parlour—to hear him pass it !

As will readily be understood, I have to relate things now that did not at the time come under my personal sight or hearing : they only reached me later. Mr. Edwin Barley looked upon his prisoner as *his* ; as much his own, with those two keen policemen posted outside the house and he inside it, as though George Heneage had lain at his feet manacled and fettered. He could not resist the temptation of entering the house that contained his long-evading enemy.

Hickens took out his revenge. Returning with his master to the large drawing-room, he contrived to let it be known that he maintained his own opinion ; giving the introduction with great emphasis—

“ Mr. Edwin Barley, Sir Harry.”

## CHAPTER VIII.

### MR. EDWIN BARLEY IN THE WEST WING.

MR. EDWIN BARLEY, standing with his back to the door, his thumbs in the button-holes of his waistcoat, as a man at complete ease, wheeled round at the words. Sir Harry Chandos waited for him to speak, never inviting him to sit.

“Good morning, Mr. Chandos.”

“Good morning,” coldly returned Sir Harry. “To what am I indebted for the honour of this visit?”

“I will tell you. One object of it is to demand an explanation of your treatment of Mrs. Penn. She has brought her wrongs to me; her only living relative, as she puts it. I suppose, as such, it lies with me to ask it. Mrs. Penn was engaged by Lady Chandos; engaged as a lady: and you have turned her away as a menial, subjecting her to gross indignity.”

Sir Harry stared at the speaker, scarcely crediting his own ears. The exceeding impudence of the proceeding, after Mrs. Penn's treacherous conduct, was something unique.

"You will obtain no explanation from me, sir; you can apply to Mrs. Penn herself if you require one. I am disgusted at the wickedness, the false deception of the whole affair, and will not condescend to recur to it. You are not welcome in this house, Mr. Edwin Barley, and I must request you to quit it. I cannot conceive how you could have dared to come here."

"The explanation, sir," persisted Mr. Edwin Barley. "Fine words will not enable you to evade it."

He spoke as though he really required the explanation. Sir Harry did not understand it, and a few short sharp words passed on either side. Both were labouring under a mistake. Sir Harry assumed that all Mrs. Penn had done in the house had been under the express direction of Mr. Edwin Barley. Mr. Edwin Barley, on his side, was not aware that she had done anything wrong. They were at cross-purposes, and at

that angry moment did not arrive at straight ones.

“Treachery?” echoed Mr. Edwin Barley, in answer to a word dropped by Sir Harry. “The police will soon be in charge of one, guilty of something worse than treachery. A criminal lying under the ban of the law is not far off.”

“You allude to my brother, Mr. Edwin Barley. True. He is lying not far off—very near.”

The quiet words—for Sir Harry’s voice had dropped to a strange calmness—took Edwin Barley by surprise. In this ready avowal, could it be that he foresaw fear to doubt that George Heneage had already again made his escape? Drawing aside the white blind, he saw one of the police officers under the trees opposite; the other of course being at the back of the house. And it reassured him. Never more could George Heneage escape him.

“Your brother shall not elude me, Mr. Chandos. I swear it. I have waited for years—for years, Harry Chandos—to catch him upon English ground. That he is on it now, I know.

I know that you have him in hiding : here in the west wing of your house. Will you resign him peacefully to the two men I have outside ? Revengeful though you may deem me, I would rather spare disturbance to your mother. The fact of his apprehension cannot be concealed from her : that is impossible ; but I would spare her as far as I can, and I would have wished to see her to tell her this. If you do not give him up quietly, the policemen must come in."

"I think—to save you and the police useless trouble—you had better pay a personal visit to my brother," said Sir Harry. "You have rightly said that he has been in hiding in the west wing ; he is there still."

"Your brother ! — George !" exclaimed Mr. Edwin Barley, quite taken aback by the invitation, and suspecting some trick.

"My brother George," was the quiet answer. "Did you think I was speaking of Sir Thomas ? He, poor fellow, is no longer in existence."

"As I hear : and I am sorry for it. Your servant wished to assure me that you had succeeded to the honours ; he calls you ' Sir Harry.'

I told him better," concluded Mr. Edwin Barley, with a cough that said much.

"I do succeed to them—more's the pity. I wish Thomas had lived to bear them to a green old age."

"Let me advise you not to *assume* them, at any rate, Harry Chandos: the time has not come for it, and the world might laugh at you. George Chandos, fugitive-criminal though he has been, would succeed until proved guilty. Wait."

"You are wasting my time," rejoined Sir Harry. "Will you pay a visit to the west wing?"

"For what purpose? You are fooling me!"

"I told you the purpose—to see my brother George. You shall see him, on my word of honour."

The answer was a gesture of assent, and Sir Harry crossed the hall to ascend the stairs. Mr. Edwin Barley slowly followed him, doubt in his step, defiance in his face. That he was thoroughly perplexed, is saying little; but he came to the conclusion as he walked along the gallery

that George Heneage was about to beseech his clemency. His clemency! Hill opened the west wing. Seeing a stranger, she would have barred it again, but Sir Harry put her aside with calm authority, and went straight to one of the rooms. Turning for a moment there, he spoke to his visitor.

“We have not been friends, Mr. Barley; the one has regarded the other as his natural enemy, still I would not allow even you to come in here without a word of warning, lest you should be shocked.”

“Lead on, sir,” was the imperative answer. And Sir Harry went in without further delay.

On the bed, laid out in his shroud, sleeping the peaceful sleep of death, was the emaciated form of George Heneage Chandos. Mr. Edwin Barley gazed at him, and the perspiration broke out on his forehead.

“By heaven! he has escaped me!”

“He has escaped all the foes of this world,” answered Sir Harry, lowly and reverently. “You perceive now, Mr. Edwin Barley, that were you to bring the whole police force of the county here, they would only have the trouble of going



back for their pains. He is at rest from persecution; and we are at rest from suspense and anxiety."

"It has destroyed my life's aim," observed Mr. Edwin Barley.

"And with it your thirst for revenge. When a man pursues another with the persistent hatred that you have pursued him, it can be called nothing less than revenge."

"Revenge! What do you mean? He did commit the murder."

"His hand was the hand that killed Philip King: but it was not intentional murder. He never knew exactly—at the time or since—how he fired the gun, save that his elbow caught against the branch of a tree when the gun was on cock. Some movement of his own undoubtedly caused it; he knew that; but not a wilful one. He asserted this with his dying lips before taking the Sacrament."

"Wilful or not wilful, he murdered Philip King," insisted Mr. Edwin Barley.

"And has paid for it. The banned life he has been obliged to live since was surely an ex-

piation. His punishment was greater than he could bear ; it was prolonged and prolonged, and his heart broke.”

Mr. Edwin Barley had his eyes fixed on the dead face, possibly tracing the likeness to the handsome young man of nine or ten years ago.

“Of other crime towards you he was innocent,” pursued Sir Harry. “He never injured you or yours ; there might have been folly in his heart in the heyday of his youth and spirits ; there was no sin. You have been unreasonably vindictive.”

“I say no,” returned Mr. Edwin Barley, striving to suppress an emotion that was rising and would not be suppressed. “Had I ever injured George Heneage, that he should come into my home and make it desolate ? What had my wife or my ward done to him that he should take their lives ? He killed both of them : the one deliberately, the other indirectly, for her death arose out of the trouble. Charlotte Delves—Mrs. Penn now, of whom you complain—lost her only relative, saving myself, when she lost Philip King. And for me ? I was left in

that same desolate home, bereft of all I cared for, left to go through life *alone*. Few men have loved a wife as I loved mine: she was my one little ewe lamb, Harry Chandos. Vindictive! Think of my wrongs."

Looking there at each other, the dead face lying between them, it might be that both felt there was much to forgive. Certainly Harry Chandos had never until that moment realized the misery it had brought to Edwin Barley.

"I see; we have all alike suffered. But he who caused the suffering is beyond reproach now."

"As things have turned out, the game is yours, Sir Harry," said Mr. Edwin Barley, who was too much a man of the world to persist in denying him the title, now that he found it was beyond dispute his. "For my actions I am accountable to none; and were the time to come over again, I should do as I have done."

He turned to quit the room as he spoke, and Mr. Chandos followed him downstairs. A word exchanged at their foot caused Mr. Barley to inquire what it was Mrs. Penn had done: and then Sir Harry gave him the full particulars, with

the additional information that she was assumed to have been acting for him, Edwin Barley.

“She was not,” said Mr. Barley, shortly. “I knew nothing of this. Placed in the house by me, Sir Harry? She placed herself in the house, as I conclude; certainly I did not place her.”

“You have met her in secret in the grounds.”

“I have met her accidentally, not secretly. Twice, I think it was: or three times, I am not sure. She chose to repeat things to me; I did not ask for them. Not that they were of any worth—as the unmolested retirement of George Heneage here proves.”

He had been moving to the hall-door gradually. Sir Harry put a sudden question to him, quite upon impulse, he told me afterwards, just as the thought occurred.

“Has your wife’s will ever been found?”

“What is that to you?” asked Mr. Edwin Barley, turning to face him.

“Little indeed. I am sorry to have mentioned it: it was not in any wish to add to the discomforts of the day. As I have, I will ask you to remember that there are others in the

world as capable of error, not to say crime, as was poor George Heneage."

"Do you insinuate that I suppressed the will?" demanded Mr. Edwin Barley.

"No. The will could not disappear without hands; but I should be sorry to give the very faintest opinion as to whose hands they were that took it. With your great fortune, it seems next door to an impossibility that you could have suppressed it: on the other hand, you alone derived benefit. The thing is a puzzle to me, Mr. Edwin Barley."

"But that you seem to speak honestly in saying so, without sinister insinuation, I would knock you down, Sir Harry Chandos," was Edwin Barley's answer.

"I insinuate nothing; and I say neither more nor less than I have said. It was a paltry sum to run a risk for, whoever might have been guilty of the abstraction. Not only that: no blessing—or luck, as the world would call it,—ever yet attended one who robbed the orphan."

"You would wish me to make a merit of generosity, and offer Miss Hereford a present of

the money," said Mr. Edwin Barley, a ring of mockery in his tones.

"By no means," hastily replied Sir Harry. "Miss Hereford's future position in life will preclude her feeling the want of it. You informed me the last time I had the honour of speaking to you, that you were Miss Hereford's only relative: as such, allow me to acquaint you with the fact that she is to be my wife."

"I expected it would end in that," was Mr. Edwin Barley's answer. "And I tell you honestly that I would have removed her from here in time to prevent it, had it been in my power. I liked the child; my wife loved her; and I had rather she married any one in the world than a Chandos. It is too late now."

"Quite too late. Although I am a Chandos, I shall hope to make her happy, Mr. Edwin Barley. I will do my best for it."

Hickens went into the hall at that juncture and the colloquy came to a close. Mr. Edwin Barley moved rapidly to the door which Hickens opened, and went away with a quick step.

"I have no further orders," he said to the

policeman, who was standing at an angle watching the back of the house and part of the avenue.

"The prisoner has escaped."

"Escaped, sir ! It must have been before we came on then. Shall we search for him ?"

"No. He is gone where search would not reach him."

Mr. Edwin Barley strode on with the last words. The man, somewhat mystified, stared after him, and then crossed the lawn to give notice to his fellow that their mission to Chandos seemed to be over.

"Le diable n'est pas si noir que l'on dit," runs the idiomatic saying in France. We have it also in English, as the world of course knows ; but it sounds better, that is, less wrong, to give it in the former language. We girls at school there said it often ; had one of us ventured on the English sentence at Miss Fenton's, that lady's eyes would have grown round with horror.

It might be applied to Mr. Edwin Barley. Looking back dispassionately, bringing reason to bear on the retrospect, I could not trace one single act or word in him that would justify me

in having thought him so bad a man. Taking the colouring from my first view of him, when his dark and certainly ugly face peeped out from the avenue at Hallam, frightening me terribly; and from the dreadful events that followed, in which my childish imagination mixed him up as the worst actor, this prejudice had lived and grown in my mind. He had really done nothing to merit it. There was the abstracted will, but it was not proved that he had taken it; probably he had not. I had been too young to realize the terrible blow brought upon him through George Heneage. And, as we got to know later, the vindictive feeling with which he had pursued him all through these years had its rise in self-defence, as well as in a desire to inflict punishment. The semi-doubt cast, or to himself seeming to be cast, on Mr. Edwin Barley at the time, in the remarks that he had been the only one to profit, and that largely, by Philip King's death, had rankled in his mind, implanting there a burning anxiety, apart from other considerations, to bring to light the real criminal. For his own part, he had never for a moment



doubted that it had been intentional, deliberate, cruel murder. And I have grown to think that the exaggeration he imparted to Philip King's dying words arose unwittingly in the confusion of the moment ; that he was not conscious he did so exaggerate. A passive listener hears words more clearly than an actor.

Altogether, the "diable" was not so black as my fancy had painted him ; indeed, I began, as days went on, to doubt whether the word would apply to Mr. Edwin Barley at all. One does not grow wise in an hour ; no, nor even in a year : youth clings to its prejudices, and it takes experience and age, and sober judgment, to subdue them.

Mr. Edwin Barley went home after quitting Chandos. Seated there, her things off, and a luncheon tray before her, with no trace of her luggage to be seen, was Charlotte Delves—Mrs. Penn of late years. Was she intending to take up her present quarters at his house ? the question mentally occurred to Mr. Edwin Barley, and it did not tend to his gratification. Not if he knew it ; he had not been upon cordial

terms with Charlotte Delves for years ; and what he had now heard of her line of conduct at Chandos vexed him.

There must be a word or two of retrospect. Shortly after Selina's death, Mr. Edwin Barley went abroad. Not a place on the European continent but he visited, one feverish object alone swaying him—the discovery of George Heneage. The detective police were at work in England with the same view : all in vain. At the end of three years he came back home ; and almost close upon it there occurred some rupture between him and Charlotte Delves, who had remained at Hallam all that time as the house's mistress. People thought she cherished visions of becoming the house's *bonâ fide* mistress, its master's wife ; if so, she was lamentably mistaken. Mr. Edwin Barley was wedded to Selina and her memory ; he had no intention whatever of exalting another into her place. Whether Charlotte found out this in too sudden a manner ; whether the cause was totally unconnected with this, certain it was a rupture occurred ; and Charlotte threw up the housekeeping, and quitted

the house. She took the same kind of service with an old man, a connexion also, of the name of Penn. He had married late in life, and had a young daughter, Lotta, who had been named after Charlotte Delves. Very much to the world's surprise—her little world—it was soon announced that Charlotte Delves was going to marry him. Mr. Edwin Barley, hearing of it, wrote to tell her what he thought of it in his own outspoken fearlessness: "Old Penn was quite a cripple, and three parts an idiot since he fell into his dotage. She would be better without him than with him, and would only make herself a laughing-stock if she married him." The gratuitous advice did not tend to heal the breach. Charlotte Delves did marry Mr. Penn, and very shortly afterwards was called upon to bury him. The young girl, Lottie, by whom her stepmother seemed to have done a good part, died within a year; and Mrs. Penn, left with a slender income, chose to go out in the world again. She became companion to a lady, and the years passed on.

Time softens most things. Mrs. Penn grew

to forget her fleeting marriage, and with it the episodes of her middle life ; and went back to her old likings and prejudices. Her heart's allegiance to Edwin Barley returned ; she was of his kin, and the wrongs inflicted by George Heneage, temporarily forgotten, resumed all their sway within her. While she was at Marden (travelling about from place to place with Mrs. Howard) some accidental occurrence caused her to suspect that George Heneage, instead of being abroad, was in concealment in England, and within a drive of Chandos. She at once wrote news of this to Mr. Edwin Barley, with whom she had held no communication since the advent of that letter of his at her marriage. It caused him to remove himself, and four or five of his household, to the vicinity of Chandos. There he took up his abode, and spent his time watching the house and the movements of Mr. Chandos, in the hope to gain some clue to the retreat of George Heneage. With this exception, the watching, which caused him to stroll at unorthodox hours into the groves and private paths, to peer in at windows by night, his watch-

ing was inoffensive. Mrs. Penn, on her side, seized on the opportunity afforded by Mrs. Freeman's illness (it was as though fortune favoured her), and got into Chandos. My presence in it might have been a serious counter-check, only that I did not recognise her. She did not recognise me in the first interview, not until the day when I sent in my name at Mrs. Marden's. Of course Mrs. Penn's object after that was to *keep* me in ignorance. She had really been to Nulle for a week or two; it was the autumn I first went there, had seen me at church with the school, and so tried to persuade me it was there I had seen her. Much as she wanted me away from Chandos in the furtherance of her own ends, cruel as were the means she used to try to effect it, she had, strange to say, taken a liking for me; and in her *dislike* to Mr. Chandos she had not much cared what wild untruths she told me of him, hoping to separate us effectually.

Of her effecting an entrance into Chandos as companion, Edwin Barley knew nothing. After she was settled there she looked out for him,

and waylaid him in the grounds. While Mr. Edwin Barley had been ignorant of her life and doings for some years, there was no doubt she had contrived to keep herself acquainted with his, including his removal to the gates of Chandos. In this interview with him, which I had partially overheard — and I now think it was the first she held with him—she told him what her object was: the finding out all there was to be found out about George Heneage. With the change in Mrs. Penn's person and the remarkable change in her hair, Mr. Edwin Barley had some difficulty in believing it to be Charlotte Delves. The hair was an unhappy calamity. Mrs. Penn, beguiled by fashion and confidential advertisements to wish to turn her light flaxen hair to gold colour, had experimented upon it: the result was not gold, but a glowing, permanent, scarlet-red. She told him she was watching at Chandos for his sake. Mr. Edwin Barley, an implacable man when once offended, was cool to her, declining, in a sense, to accept her services. If she made discoveries that could assist in the tracking of George Heneage, well and

good ; she might bring them to him : and so the interview ended.

Mrs. Penn might have made a discovery to some purpose but for two things. The one was that she was a real coward, and believed the ghost haunting the pine-walk to be a ghost : the other was that she took up a theory of her own in regard to the west wing. She assumed that Lady Chandos had become mad ; to this she set down all the mystery enacted in it ; and this view she imparted to Mr. Edwin Barley. He neither asked her to bring tales to him, nor encouraged her to do it ; if she worked, she worked of her own accord ; and his doors remained closed to her. At least Mrs. Penn did not choose to try whether they would be open. Until this day : and her entering them now could not be said to be of her own seeking.

She sat taking her luncheon, cold partridge and sherry. Mr. Barley entered in silence, and stood with a dark expression on his lips. Charlotte knew it of old, and saw that something had not pleased him. Things had very much displeased him ; firstly, the escape of the long-sought-



for prisoner ; secondly, Madam Charlotte's doings at Chandos. Mr. Edwin Barley might have winked at the peering and prying, might have encouraged the peeping into letters ; but to steal things (even though but in appearance) he very much disapproved of, especially as *he* was looked upon as having instigated her.

"What's the matter, Mr. Barley?" asked Charlotte, helping herself to some more partridge. "He *is* there, is he not?"

"Who?"

"George Heneage. In the west wing."

"Yes, he's there. I've seen him."

"Ah, I knew it," she said, with a relieved sigh, and she suddenly poured out another glass of sherry, and lifted it to her lips. "Here's to your health, George Heneage! Have the police got him?"

"No. The police have gone. I dismissed them."

Charlotte flung down her knife and fork in a passion. "Dismissed them! Without taking him! Are you going to show leniency at the eleventh hour, like a weak woman, Mr. Edwin Barley? After what I have done to trace him!"



“ You have done a little too much,” returned Mr. Edwin Barley. And, abandoning his short and crusty answers, he spoke at length his opinion of her acts at Chandos. He was not in the humour to suppress any bitterness of tongue, and said some keen things.

Charlotte went into a real passion.

What with the disappointment at finding Mr. Edwin Barley in this mood, which seemed to promise badly for her semi-idea of prolonging her stay under his roof; what with his ingratitude after all her pains; what with her recent ignominious exit from Chandos; and what with the good old sherry, that is apt to have its effects when taken at mid-day, Mrs. Penn lost control of her temper. Prudence was forgotten in passion; and Mr. Edwin Barley was doomed to listen to the wild ravings of an angry woman. Reproach for the past, for things that she had deemed wrongs in the bygone years, came out all the more freely for having been pent up within her so long. She contrasted her conduct with his: her ever anxious solicitude for his interests; his neglect and cruel non-recognition of

them. As the most forcible means of impressing his ingratitude upon him, she recapitulated the benefits she had wrought one by one ; talking fast and furiously. Mr. Edwin Barley, a cool man under petty grievances, listened in silence : he had said his say, said it with stinging coldness, and it was over. Feeling very much inclined to stop his ears was he, when something further said by her caused him to open them, as ears had never perhaps been opened yet. Charlotte had shot beyond her mark in her reckless rage ; and was scarcely aware that she had done so until Mr. Edwin Barley, his face and eyes alike ablaze, seized her wrists.

She had gone too far to retract, and she brazened out her avowal, making a merit of it, rather than taking shame.

It was she who had stolen Mrs. Edwin Barley's will. She, Charlotte Delves. She had taken it as a duty—in her regard for his, Edwin Barley's interests. Who was the child, Anne Hereford, that she should inherit what of right belonged to him ? When she had appeared to find the keys in the china basket on the mantel-shelf, it was she who had put them there ready to be found.

There ensued no reproach from Mr. Barley's lips. At first she thought he was going to strike her, staring at her with his white and working face; but the minutes passed and he overcame his emotion. Perhaps he feared he might be tempted to strike her if he spoke: it seemed as if a blow had fallen on him—as if the depth of feeling aroused by her confession were, not so much wrath, as a sense of awful injury to himself that could never be repaired.

“What became of the will?” was the only question he put when the silence was getting ominous to her ears.

“I burnt it. It was done for you. Throughout my life I have had regard only to the interests of the Barleys. And this is my recompense—reproach and base ingratitude!”

He quitted the room without speaking another word. This was the worst dose Mr. Edwin Barley had received. He knew that the disappearance of the will had been set down by some people to his own hands. Why, had not Sir Harry Chandos hinted as much, but an hour ago? He had treated the past insinuations with contempt, always insisting that there had been

no will to abstract—for he fully believed his wife had herself repented of the testament and destroyed it. He knew how capricious Selina was ; never keeping in the same mind two days together. And now he had to hear that the world was right and he wrong : the will *had* been abstracted. It did not tend to soothe him, the being told that it was taken out of regard to him and to his monied interests.

Altogether he deemed it well to cut short his interview with Mrs. Penn. That lady, finding the house intended to show itself inexorably inhospitable, put her bonnet on and went forth to the railway station of her own accord, her luggage behind her. Whether she should annoy Mr. Edwin Barley by sundry letters of reproach, one of the reproaches being that he had never cared for any living being but his doll of a wife ; or whether she should wash her hands of him altogether, and treat him henceforth with silent contempt, she had not determined in her mind. She inclined to the letters. Taking her seat in a first-class carriage, she would have leisure to think of it and decide on her journey to London.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE LAST FRIGHT OF ALL.

I SAW none of them all the afternoon. After the departure of Mr. Edwin Barley, Sir Harry Chandos went out with Dr. Laken. Mrs. Chandos and Madame de Mellissie were in the east wing, and, I fancied, Lady Chandos with them. Emily had offered to take Mrs. Penn's place for a short while, so far as sitting with Mrs. Chandos went; it was one of the best-natured things I had known her do.

Oh, but it seemed to me ominous, the suffering me to sit there all the afternoon alone, no companion but myself and the oak-parlour, and with death in the house! The few words dropped by Emily to her brother about his changed position were beating their sad refrain on my brain. His position was indeed changed: and I was but a poor governess, although I might

be the descendant of the Keppc-Carews. I quite thought that the neglect now cast upon me was an earnest of proof that the family at least would not countenance my entrance into it. Well, I would do what was right, and give him back his fealty: I could but act honourably, though my heart broke over the separation that might ensue.

It was quite dusk when Mr. Chandos came back—the old name will slip out. Dr. Laken went upstairs at once; he turned into the oak-parlour.

“All alone in the dark, Anne?” he said, drawing up the blind a few inches.

It gave a little more light, and I could see his features. He looked pre-occupied; but I thought the occasion had come to speak and ought to be seized upon.

What should I say? How frame the words necessary for my task? With my hands and lips trembling, brain and heart alike beating, I was about to speak incoherently, when some one came into the room.

Emily, as I thought at first; but when she came nearer the window I saw that it was Mrs.

Chandos. Being left alone for an instant, she had taken the opportunity to come in search of Sir Harry.

"I have not seen you since the Indian mail came in this morning," she said to him. "Why have you not been near me?"

"The day has been a busy one for me," he answered, speaking with the gentleness that one uses to a child. "Many things have had to be seen to."

"It is sad news."

"Very." And the ring of pain in his voice no one could mistake. "Thomas would have come home now."

"Instead of that, we shall never see him again; and you, they tell me, are Sir Harry Chandos. Who would have thought once that you would ever inherit!"

"Strange changes take place," was his reply, spoken altogether in a different tone, as if he did not care to encourage in her any reminiscence of the past.

"It is so singular that they should both die together. At least, die to us. That when we

were mourning for the one, news should arrive of the death of the other."

"Very singular. But it enables us to mourn openly, Ethel."

"Shall you live at Chandos?" she resumed after a pause.

"Certainly."

"But mamma says she shall leave it and take me." She sometimes called Lady Chandos mother. "Would you stay on alone?"

"I shall not be alone for long."

She looked at him questioningly. I could see her lovely blue eyes raised to his in the dim light.

"Perhaps you will be marrying, Sir Harry?"

"Yes. In a short time."

The faint pink on her delicate cheeks deepened to crimson. Could it be that she had ever suffered the old hopes to arise should certain contingencies occur? Surely not! And yet—poor thing!—her intellect was not quite as ours is.

"Have you fixed upon your wife?" she inquired, drawing a deep breath.

"I have asked this young lady to be my wife."



He indicated me, standing as I did back against the window. Mrs. Chandos looked at me, her bright colour varying. The same thought evidently crossed her that I had thought might cross them—my unfitness in point of rank. She spoke to him proudly and coldly.

“Your wife will be Lady Chandos now, you must remember.”

“I do not forget it, Ethel.”

She sighed imperceptibly and turned to the door. He went to open it for her.

“Emily and mamma have gone to the west wing. I should not like to go there: I never saw anybody dead. I was almost afraid to come down the stairs, and now I am afraid to go up them.”

“Do you wish to go up?” asked Sir Harry.

“Yes. I wish to be in my own rooms.”

He held out his arm to her, and she took it. I stayed alone, wishing the explanation had been made before he went away. But ere the lapse of a minute Mrs. Chandos was in the east wing, and he back in the room with me.

“Would you please let me speak to you a

moment," I said—for he had only returned to take up a small parcel left on the table: and he came up to me, putting it down again.

But I could not speak. No, I could not. Now that the moment was come, every word went out of my mind, power of utterance from my mouth. He stood looking at me—at my evident agitation and whitening lips.

"It is only right that I should speak; I have been waiting all the afternoon to do so, Mr. Chandos—I beg your pardon; I mean Sir Harry," I brought out at last, and the very fact of speaking gave me courage. "I wish—I wish——"

"Why, Anne, what is the matter?" he asked, for a great breath like a sob stopped me, momentarily. "What is it that you wish?"

"To tell you that I quite absolve you from anything you have said to me:" and the shame I felt at having betrayed emotion brought to me a sudden and satisfactory coldness of manner. "Please not to think any more about me. It is not your fault, and I shall not think it is. Let it all be forgotten."

A perception of my meaning flashed upon him, badly though I had expressed it. He looked at me steadily.

“Do you mean, not think further of making you my wife?”

“Yes.”

“Very well. But now will you tell me why you say this?”

I hesitated. I think I was becoming agitated again: all because I knew I was getting through my task so stupidly.

“Circumstances have altered with you.”

“Well, yes, in a measure. I am a trifle richer; and my wife—as Ethel remarked just now—will be Lady instead of Mrs. Chandos. Why should you object to that?”

“Oh, Mr. Chandos, you know. It is not I who would object; but your family. And—perhaps—yourself.”

“Anne, I vow I have a great mind to punish you for that last word. Oh, you silly child!” he continued, putting his arms round my waist and holding me close before him. “But that it would punish me as well as you, I’d not speak to

you for three days : I'd let you think I took you at your word."

" Please don't joke. Don't laugh at me."

" Joke ! laugh ! I suppose you think that under the ' altered circumstances,' as you call them, I ought to renew my vows. And, by the way, I don't know that I ever did make you a formal offer ; one that you could use against me in a suit of breach of promise. Miss Hereford, I lay my heart and hand at your disposal. Will you condescend to be my future wife, Lady Chandos ?"

Partly from vexation, partly from a great tumult of bliss, I gave no answer. Sir Harry took one for himself. Ay, and was welcome to take it.

With my face in a burning heat,—with my heart in a glow of love, as if filled with the strains of some delightful melody,—with my whole being thrilling with rapture,—I ran upstairs, barely in time to change my dress for dinner, and nearly ran against Lady Chandos, who was coming out of the east wing.

“There are twin genii, who, strong and mighty,  
Under their guidance mankind retain;  
And the name of the lovely one is Pleasure,  
And the name of the loathly one is Pain.  
Never divided, where one can enter  
Ever the other comes close behind;  
And he who in pleasure his thoughts would centre,  
Surely pain in the search shall find.”

The good old words (and I don't at this present moment of writing recollect whose they are) came forcibly to my mind in their impressive truth. The sight of Lady Chandos changed my pleasure to pain: for I had had no warranty from *him* that she would approve of what he had been doing. Bounding into my bed-room, I stood there at the open door until she should pass: it would not do to shut it in her face, as though I had not seen her.

But instead of passing, she turned to me. While my head was bowed in silent salutation, she halted, and put her hand upon my shoulder, causing my face to meet hers. With the consciousness of whose it had just met, and very closely, with the consciousness of feeling like a miserable interloping girl who was to be exalted into the place of her predecessor against her ap-

proving will, no wonder I trembled and bent my shrinking face.

“And so you are to be my daughter-in-law?”

The words were not spoken in angry pride, but in gentle kindness. I looked up and saw love in her eyes; and she might see the gratitude that shone in every line of mine.

“Harry told me last night, in the midst of our great sadness; after you had been into our poor George’s room. My dear, I have heard a great deal of you since I have been upstairs in confinement, and I feel sure you will make him a good wife.”

In my revulsion of feeling I clasped her hands in mine, thanking her—oh, so earnestly. “There’s only one thing,” I said, with the tears running down my face.

“What’s that?”

“I am not good enough for him. And oh, Lady Chandos, I was so afraid you would not think me so. I have been a governess, you know. I would have given him up, I have just told him so, now he is Sir Harry Chandos.”

She smiled a little. “One objection arose to me when he first spoke—that you were the niece

of Mrs. Edwin Barley. But I have grown to-day to think it may be well to overcome the prejudice. Do you know what Harry says?"

I only shook my head.

"He says, as Mrs. Edwin Barley brought (I must speak freely) a curse into our house, you may be destined to bring to it a blessing as the recompense. My dear child, I think it will be so."

She inclined her head, and gave me a fervent kiss. I could have knelt to receive it. I pressed her hand as if I could not let it go. I watched her along the gallery to the west wing amid my blinding tears. I could hardly help lifting my voice aloft in thanks to Heaven for its great love to me. Hill came up the stairs and broke the charm.

"Why, Miss Hereford, you have no light," she said; and indeed my chamber was in darkness. "Allow me to light the branches, miss."

By the unusual attention—a solitary candle would have been good enough for me before—by the sound of her voice as she offered it, I saw she had heard the news. I could not help put-

ting my hand into hers as she turned round from the lighted branches.

“ Hill, I hope you will forget that I used to cross you about that west wing. I did not know what it was, you see. But oh, if you had only told me ! I would have been so true to you all.”

Old Hill put her candle down, that she might have her other hand at liberty ; and she laid it upon mine, making it a prisoner.

“ Miss, it is I who have got to ask pardon of you for my crossness. We were all living in so much dread, that a stranger in the house brought nothing but extra fear and trouble. But I liked you through it all ; I liked your face that morning years ago on the Nulle steamer at London Bridge. Miss, it is the same nice face still. And, Miss Hereford, I am not sorry to hear that you are to be for good at Chandos.”

“ We shall be friends always, Hill.”

“ I hope so, miss. I shan't be here ; I go with my lady.”

She went away with her candle. It gave me a shy feeling to think the news should be known to the household. But I soon found it was not



known. Hill, the confidential attendant, it may be said friend, was made acquainted with all things, but she did not carry them forth to the servants under her.

Emily and Dr. Laken dined with us in the oak parlour. Lady and Mrs. Chandos dined in the east wing. Except that a subdued air pervaded all, even to the tone of our voices and the servants' tread, the meal and evening were just as usual.

"Why did you never tell me you were a Keppe-Carew?" Emily suddenly asked me when we were alone together.

"But I am not a Keppe-Carew."

"Nonsense. Your mother was : it's all the same."

"As a governess, I did not care to say that my family was good."

"You were a little idiot, then, Anne Hereford. The Keppe-Carews are as good as we are—better, some might say ; and so I suppose I must reconcile myself to the idea of your becoming my brother's wife."

"Oh, Madame de Mellissie, if you only could !"

“And forget that you were a governess. Well, child, I never disliked you; and there’s the truth. It won’t seem right, though, for you to take precedence of us all—as you will when you are Sir Harry’s wife.”

“I never will; indeed, I never will.”

She burst out laughing. At my being so simple-minded, she told Dr. Laken, who then came in.

It was chilly that night; and when I got into my room at bedtime, I found a fire blazing in the grate—by Hill’s orders, I was sure. Ah me, with all my natural propensity to be simple-minded, my earnest wish to remain so for ever, I did feel a glow of pride at being tacitly recognised as the future mistress of Chandos.

Over this fire—a bright, beautiful fire, as befitted a dutil house—I sat late, reading, musing, half dreaming. The clock struck twelve, and still I sat on.

For half an hour, or so. It was so delightful to realize my happiness; and I was in no mood for sleep. But of course sleep had to be prepared for, and I took my feet from the fender, wondering what sort of a night it was. There

had been indications of frost in the evening, and I drew the heavy window curtains back, to take a view outside. "No fear of seeing a ghost now," I too boastfully whispered.

I thought I should have fainted; I nearly dropped on the floor with startled alarm. Not at a ghost: there was none to be seen; but at something that in that startling moment seemed to me far worse.

Emerging from its progress up the avenue, at a snail's pace, as if it cared not to alarm sleepers with its echoes,—advancing, as it seemed, upon me,—came a great, black, dismal thing, savouring of the dead. A hearse. A hearse without its plumes, driven by a man in a long black cloak.

For a moment I believed I saw a phantom. I rubbed my eyes, and looked, and rubbed again, doubting what spectral vision was obscuring them. But no, it was too real, too palpable. On it came, on and on; turned round, and halted before the entrance door.

I sat down to hold my beating heart: sure never were enacted night alarms like those I had

encountered at Chandos. And, while I sat, muffled sounds as of measured footsteps bearing a burden, smote upon my ear from the corridor.

I listened till they had passed my door, and then silently drew it an inch open. Do not attribute it to unjustifiable curiosity: I declare that I was impelled to it by fear. Strange though the assertion may seem, it is true; the real cause of all this did not occur to me. Had I been so absorbed in my own happiness as to forget all else?—or had I grown stupid? I know not—only that it was as I say.

They had gained the head of the stairs, and were stopping there, apparently hesitating how best to get down. Four of them besides Sir Harry Chandos, and they bore a coffin on their shoulders covered with black cloth,—Dr. Laken, Hickens, and two men, who looked like carpenters. So! that was it!—the unhappy George Heneage was being removed by night!—and the stairs of the west wing, as I knew later, were too narrow.

I could not see, for the hearse was right underneath my window, but I heard the sounds as

they put in the coffin, after they had got it safely down. And then the great black thing drove away again, with its slow and covert steps, some of them following it. It was going to the railway station.

Sir Harry and Dr. Laken were away for two or three days. The funeral had taken place from the doctor's house. There was no real reason why he might not have been buried from Chandos, except that it would have created so much noise, and put the place up in arms.

And so ended the life and history of the ill-fated George Heneage Chandos.

## CHAPTER X.

### BACK FOR AYE AT CHANDOS.

ONCE more there was light in the gloomy house of Chandos. The blinds were drawn up ; the sunlight was allowed to shine in. He who had been the destroyer of its tranquillity and its fair name,—through whom, and for whom, they had lived in dread for so many years, having, as Mrs. Penn aptly expressed it, a sword hanging perpetually over their heads, which might fall at any minute,—he, the erring man, was laid to rest ; and had left rest for them. With him, the fear and the dread were gone ; almost the disgrace ; there was no further need of secrecy, of retirement, of ghosts, of sleep-walking ; there was no longer dread of a night invasion by the police. Chandos could hold up its head now in the face of day.

The deep mourning was supposed, by all save a few, to be worn for Sir Thomas Chandos. When Mrs. Chandos appeared in her widow's garb, people at first treated it as one of her ec-

centricities, but the truth got to be known in time. They put me into mourning too ; and it was done in this way.

“ Would you not like to wear it ? ” Sir Harry said to me the day he came home. “ I think, as you are in the house, one of us, it might be well ; also as my future wife. What do you say, Anne ? Would you object ? ”

“ Indeed I would not object : I should like to wear it. I will order — ” and there the state of the case occurred to me, and I sat down in consternation.

I had not a shilling in the world. I had no money, either for mourning, or for my wedding clothes. The exceeding incongruity of this order of affairs with my position as the future Lady Chandos, struck on me with shame and dismay. What would they all think of me ? What reflections of meanness might even the servants not cast upon me ? Tears of mortification filled my eyes, nearly dropped upon my burning cheeks.

“ What’s the matter, Anne ? ”

“ I have no money. ”

Sir Harry laughed. “ Don’t cry over that, my darling. You’ll have so much soon, you

won't know what to do with it. Tell my mother of your dilemma."

*I* did not. Perhaps he did. In the afternoon Hill came to my room with Lady Chandos's dressmaker; and in two days my black things were home.

The first visitor we had at the house—and he arrived the day I put my mourning on—was Monsieur de Mellissie, looking very ill. Of course he had come after his wife, having started the instant he was able to travel. A somewhat stormy interview ensued between them; but she spoke like one accustomed to have things her own way, and he appeared rather meek beside her. He had arrived with the view of taking her back to France; she vowed and protested that she was not going home yet awhile—that all the steamers plying between the two countries should not drag her; her mamma was about to spend some time at Brighton or Scarborough, as might be agreed upon, and she purposed accompanying her: she wanted recruiting as well as other people.

Lady Chandos stepped forward to the rescue, her compassion awakened for the poor, sick,



evidently suffering man. The first thing, he must go to bed and be nursed, she said; they would talk of plans afterwards. Monsieur de Mellissie was really too ill to dispute the mandate; neither did he feel inclined to do it: after his hurried journey from Paris, bed seemed as a very haven of rest.

They left the room, followed by Lady Chandos, and the next to appear was the agent, Mr. Dexter. He came in, rubbing his hot face as usual. Not that the weather put him into a heat to-day, but the news he brought.

Mr. Edwin Barley had gone away. Mr. Edwin Barley's servant had called upon him with a cheque for a twelvemonth's rent and taxes, and an intimation that his master would not occupy the house again. Mr. Dexter might make what use he pleased of it. If there were any dilapidations for which Mr. Edwin Barley was legally responsible, they would be paid for on the amount being sent to him at the Oaks.

"Gone away, has he?" cried Sir Harry.

"Gone clean away, sir, bag and baggage," replied Mr. Dexter, who seemed not able to get over the surprising fact. "It's the oddest thing

I ever knew. The furniture—it was only hired, as you may remember, Sir Harry—is already being removed out of the house. A strange whim, to be red-hot for a place one month, and run away from it the next!”

“Very,” said Sir Harry, quietly.

“I suppose the truth is, he found the house so different from his own place, the Oaks, that he couldn’t reconcile himself to stop in it,” resumed Mr. Dexter, talking as fast as ever. “A magnificent place that, his servant tells me; he has another, too, close by it, that he keeps up as well. I pressed the question on the servant—a most respectable man, quite superior, Sir Harry—what could be taking his master away: but he said he didn’t know, unless it might be that he was disappointed at finding the shooting here so poor. The preserves at the Oaks are hardly to be matched in the kingdom. Any way, Sir Harry, he’s *gone*, whatever may have taken him.”

As Mr. Dexter went out of the room, disburthened of his news, Sir Harry came to the window where I sat at work, laid his hand upon my head, and made me look up at him.

“Is that little heart of yours relieved by the tidings?”

“Yes, oh, yes. I have not dreaded Mr. Edwin Barley so much the last few days; but I am glad he is gone. I was always fearing that he might apply for some power that would enable him legally to take me hence.”

“In that case I must have got legal power on my side in the shape of a special licence, and married you romantically in the great drawing-room at twelve at night, and so made you secure in that way. I think even now it may be safer, Anne, not to delay the ceremony long.”

I looked up in consternation, believing he really thought there might still be danger, and met the expression in his eyes. Mine fell on my work again. I began sewing fast.

“Don’t you think Monsieur de Mellissie looks very ill, Sir Harry?”

“I do; but low fever reduces a man greatly. When are you going to leave off the ‘Sir?’ ‘Sir Harry’ is worse than ‘Mr. Chandos’ was.”

“But what can I call you?”

“I was christened Harry.”

“ I shall learn it in time,” I answered, shyly, “ through hearing the others say it.”

“ Anne, do you know what poor George said the last night of his life ?” he asked, after a pause.

“ No. Was it about me ?”

“ It was about you : when you were the little thing he met at Hallam. He said you were a sweet, loveable child : truthful, honest, and good. I think you are the same still.”

I bent my blushing face : praises were so sweet from him. Sir Harry suddenly clasped me to him with a deep sound—quite a cry of love ; and I had to kneel down afterwards and hunt for my needle.

A few mornings subsequent to this, the post brought a packet addressed to Sir Harry Chandos. When I saw it was Mr. Edwin Barley’s handwriting, my heart failed me. Sir Harry read it twice over, glanced at me, and put it in his pocket. Monsieur de Mellissie was considerably better ; the change of air and scene had almost restored him. He did not yet get up to breakfast. I, Emily, and her brother took it alone. Plans had been under discussion for some days. Sir Harry’s marriage was already talked of openly.

“Mamma says it will be Scarborough,” observed Emily, following out the train of thought she had been pursuing while Sir Harry read his letter. “She shall go there for a month, and get to Heneage Grange for Christmas. Ethel goes with her of course, and so shall I. Alfred also; she has been inviting him. And you, Anne—where do you go?”

I could not tell. I had neither money nor friends. Except the Miss Barlieus.

“Where are you going, Anne: don’t you hear me?” she cried, with some impatience. “Even if mamma remained at Chandos, *you* could not, under the same roof with Harry. It would be out of all precedent, you know. The world *would* talk.”

“Wouldn’t it?” put in Sir Harry. But I thought he was laughing at her.

“Where are you to be married? I mean, from whose house?” she asked, looking straight at me.

“From—Miss Barlieu’s,” I suggested, humbly, feeling how very humble my share of everything was altogether.

Emily gave a scream. “From Miss Barlieu’s!

Sir Harry Chandos take his wife from *them* ? Well, you have notions of things, Anne Hereford. You ought to be married from Keppe-Carew."

"There is no one at Keppe-Carew now. Arthur Carew is a boy at school."

"Oh well, I wash my hands of it," said Emily ; "I suppose mamma will have to arrange it all. Look here, Anne ; I mean to be a frequent visitor at Chandos, so I give you fair warning."

It was on my lips to say she would be always welcome, when Sir Harry spoke : telling her she might probably find that mamma *had* arranged it ; all that was necessary to be arranged. She flew upstairs to ask, and Sir Harry turned to me.

Oh what wonderful news he had to tell ! That old saying I spoke of but a few pages back was nothing to it. I sat and listened as one in a vast maze—and when Sir Harry showed me the letter, I read it twice over, as he had done, before knowing whether or not to believe it.

Mr. Edwin Barley had made over to me the amount of money left by Selina, with the full interest thereon at five per cent. up to the present date. He frankly stated that the mystery of the

lost will had now been cleared up : it had been (contrary to his own opinion) abstracted, and, as he found, burnt. He did not give any hint as to the culprit ; with all his sins, he was too much of a gentleman to do that : I could acknowledge it now that my prejudices were partially removed : but we felt sure (and knew it later) that it was Charlotte Delves. This money he had caused to be settled on me to my exclusive use and benefit. He informed Sir Harry that the first instalment of the half-yearly interest was waiting to be drawn by me.

“ So you are an heiress, after all,” said Sir Harry, laughing. “ You can buy your wedding dress.”

But I did not laugh. I was thinking how I had misjudged Mr. Edwin Barley. I had thought him so hard and unjust a man ! Hard, he might be : but strictly just.

“ I should like to write and thank him.”

“ Certainly. Write when you like, and what you like. I shall answer his letter. It contains something more, that I have not shown you.”

“ Am I not to see it ?”

For answer Sir Harry folded the letter back,

and placed a postscript before me. It seemed to me more amazing than the other.

“Should my niece, Anne Hereford, find herself less happy as Lady Chandos—your wife—than she expects to be, and wish for a refuge, my house will be open to her. If she enters it, whether in the present year or in those long to come, she will be treated in every way as my own child; and be very amply provided for at my death.”

“Do you expect you will require a refuge?”

His eyes were gleaming with merriment as he spoke it—a whole lifetime of loving affection in their depths. If mine unconsciously looked back their great and tender trust, it was not my fault. But a vision of sometime meeting Edwin Barley and thanking him for this new kindness; of making some little atonement for my past hatred, so far as words of gratitude could atone, rose within me as a vision.

The following week we quitted Chandos for Scarborough—all of us, except Sir Harry. There were many things to be done to the house, improvements and alterations, and he remained to superintend them. He spent Christmas with us at Heneage Grange: it was a smaller place than



Chandos, very open, very pretty, and belonged to Lady Chandos for life. I was to remain and be married from thence ; Lady Chandos so decided it.

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The winter had passed, the spring had come, before I saw Chandos again. I was then in Harry's carriage : alone with him ; his dear wife, his wife of only a day or two. Chandos was very far from Heneage Grange, and we had taken the journey easily, travelling post.

I saw it as we turned round from the avenue ; and did not know it : so different was it now in its light and gay appearance from the gloomy place of the previous autumn. The trees, some of them cut down, were budding into the fresh green of spring ; the flowers were opening in their parterres ; the birds sang joyously ; the once closed and barred windows were open cheerily to the warm sun. All things spoke of hope for us, as if Nature had arrayed herself expressly in her brightest colours.

I saw the servants in their gala clothes, with their glad faces of greeting, coming forth to welcome us, Hickens at their head, and Lizzy

Dene with her bunches of black curls. The tears rained over my eyes, and Harry turned to me.

“My darling, what is grieving you?”

“Joy, I think. There is a promise of so much happiness that I cannot realize it, can scarcely believe in it. My past life has been nothing but loneliness; can you wonder at my almost doubting the great blessings showered upon me now? Harry!”—and I looked down with a shy whisper—“it seems that I never, never can be sufficiently grateful to God.”

“We will try to be so, Anne. Sufficiently, no; but just a little, as He shall give us aid for. What has been your life, compared to the suffering of mine?—and He has lifted it from me.”

He bent his head, I know in prayer. Prayer never to forget the great mercies given. The carriage stopped at the door, and he helped me out.

Once more in the old hall; but it had light now, and bright painted windows, and all sorts of beautiful things. Hill came forward. It was a surprise. Lady Chandos had despatched her there, to superintend for our reception, lending her to Chandos for a week.

“Welcome, my lady; welcome home.”

My lady ! I think it was the first time I had been addressed so, and glanced at Harry. He had me on his arm, and was leading me into the oak parlour ! The dear oak parlour ! We might have to keep state at times, but that would ever be his favourite room and mine.

“ Harry, how beautiful it all is ! Do you know who I should like to ask to come and see us first of all ? ”

“ Well ! ” he said, smiling.

“ Miss Annette Barlieu. ”

“ And so we will. ”

Harry came into my dressing-room that night with an open Bible in his hand. He made me sit down by him while he read a chapter aloud ; and I found it was to be his usual custom morning and evening. It was that chapter in Deuteronomy where the following verses occur ; and I knew why he had chosen it.

“ And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities which thou buildedst not,

“And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive-trees which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;

“Then beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

“Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God and serve him. . . . And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may be well with thee.

“And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord thy God, as he hath commanded us.”

“Amen!” said Harry, softly, as he closed the book, carrying it with him from the room.

And I knelt down alone to say my prayers, my heart full to overflowing with a sense of its great blessings, and lifted up in thankfulness to Heaven.

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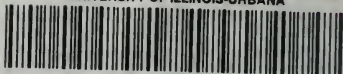








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